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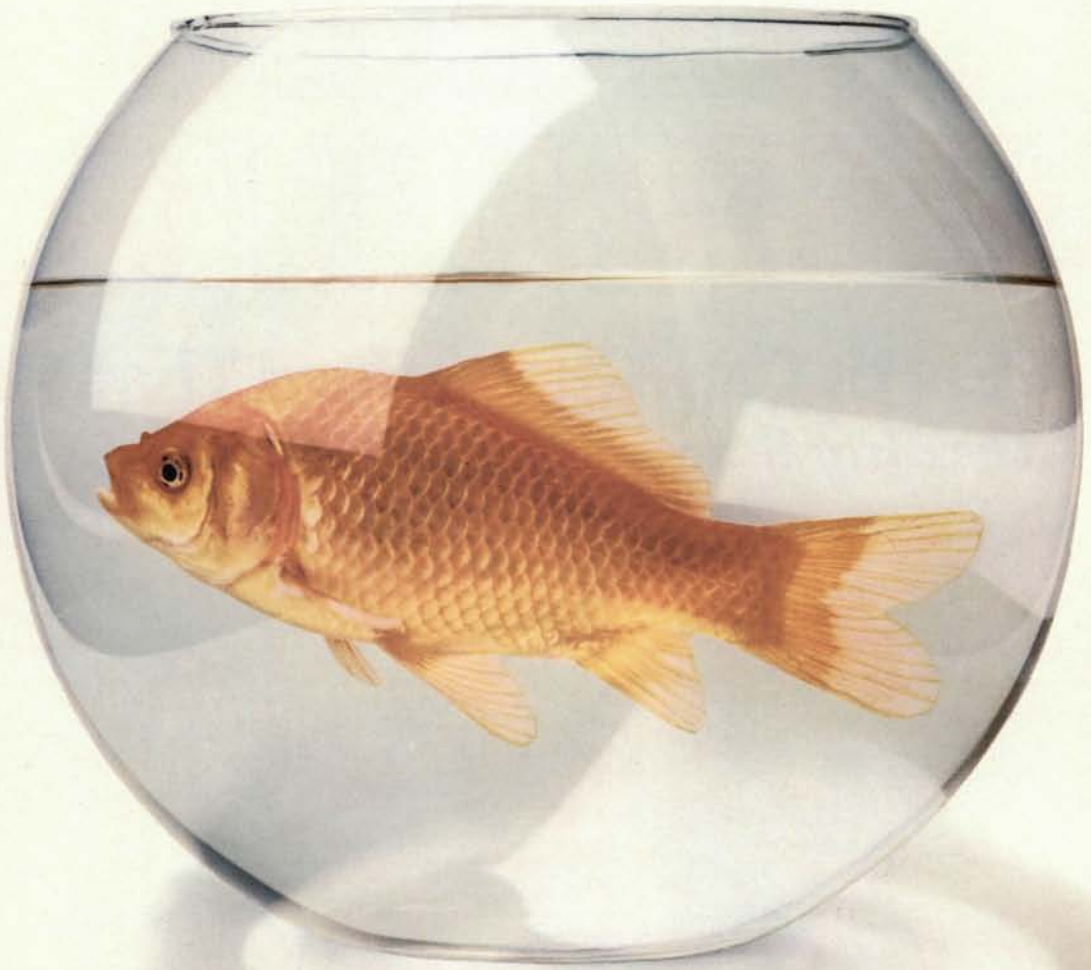

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FROM WASHINGTON

Nazis And Communists

To demonstrate our contempt for Nazism, now a half century in the past, we have just sent a man against his will to the Soviet Union and a living legal system where he has already been condemned to death in absentia. What a blow against totalitarianism!

Some conservatives such as Patrick Buchanan and William Buckley argue that Karl Linnas might not be guilty of committing atrocities as a concentration camp commander in Estonia during World War II. In fact, the evidence is overwhelming that he ran a camp where 12,000 people died and that he personally supervised the mass slaughter of women and children. But the certainty of his guilt is beside the point. The point is that we are in effect endorsing the Soviet system of justice by allowing it to act as our proxy.

In this country we don't punish a man, let alone kill him, because we're sure he's guilty. We punish him because he's been found guilty under a judicial ritual—partly designed to determine guilt, partly designed to protect innocents, partly designed to serve other policy goals, partly designed for no logical purpose but honored as a ceremonial tribute to the ideal of blind justice—which is one of the things that distinguishes us from Nazis and Communists.

The Linnas case has produced a bizarre inversion among the pundits. Usually it is conservatives who complain about guilty people getting off on technicalities and liberals who emphasize that serving justice is not simply a matter of punishing the guilty. On this occasion it is the Buckleys and Buchanans clutching at procedural and evidentiary straws, and my former teacher at Harvard Law School, Anthony Lewis of the *New York Times*, who argues, in effect, "We know he's guilty, so why the big fuss?"

The United States has the most elaborate, indeed overblown, procedural protections for criminal suspects in the world. A foreign judicial system is not illegitimate simply because it lacks *Miranda* warnings, the exclusionary rule, and the other paraphernalia of American justice. We have extradition treaties with other nations using different systems. But we don't extradite people, citizens or non-citizens, to the Soviet Union, for the obvious reason that its own judicial paraphernalia—the secret police, the gulag—offend our sense of decency.

Karl Linnas got the bum's rush because of the nice distinction between extradition and deportation. It's true, as defenders of the result point out, that deportees get plenty of American-style due process. Linnas's case was heard 14 times in one court or another before he finally was put on a plane to the Soviet Union. But a deportation hearing is very different from a criminal trial. There is no jury. The standard of proof is lower ("clear and convincing evidence" as opposed to the lofty "beyond a reasonable doubt"). The 1978 law that opened the door to these Nazi deportations, known as the Holtzman amendment, actually provides that a person—once stripped of his citizenship for lying on an immigration form—can be deported for having "advocated" the persecution of innocent people.

All this is possible because of a towering legal fiction. As a federal judge put it in the Linnas case, "Deportation of noncitizens from the United States . . . has generally been held not to constitute punishment." That includes forcibly shipping someone to a totalitarian nation where he has already been sentenced to death.

Not that Linnas deserves any better. But if it's no more than justice that Karl Linnas is getting, why can't we arrange to give it to him ourselves instead of deputizing the world's leading thugs? Answer: there are serious constitutional problems—as there should be—about punishing crimes committed long ago and far away. The Constitution specifically forbids "ex post facto" lawmaking, meaning you can't outlaw behavior that occurred before the law was passed. Although Article I authorizes Congress "to define and punish . . . offenses against the Law of Nations," there is some doubt whether this would permit a law punishing criminal behavior in a foreign country with no connection to the United States.

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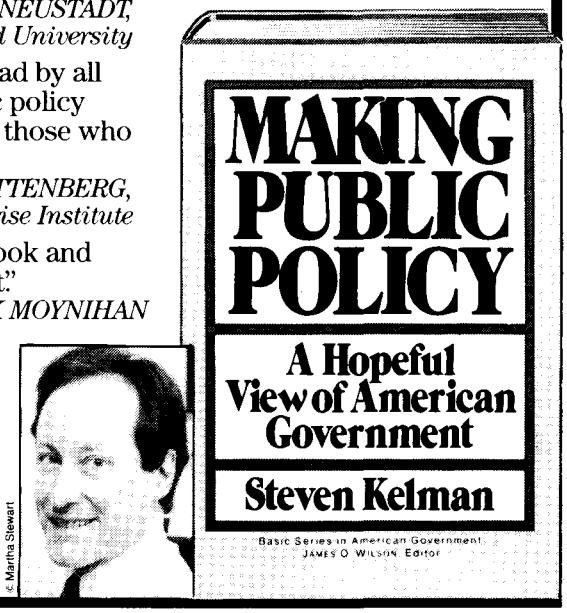
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Medical Research–building a healthier future

If you've ever been treated for high blood pressure... heart disease...diabetes...or almost any health problem, medical progress based on research has already touched your life.

Because of medical research, polio no longer strikes in epidemic proportions every summer. Today about three-quarters of patients diagnosed as having Hodgkin's disease will survive five years or longer—as opposed to less than half twenty years ago. Current treatment options for people with heart disease and high blood pressure include medication that helps the body's natural regulators to control blood pressure and volume, enabling the heart to function with less strain.

Scientists are now working on new ways of treating such devastating afflictions as heart disease, cancer and Alzheimer's disease. They are testing new enzyme inhibitors that may control or reverse the late complications of diabetes. Forthcoming breakthroughs in understanding biological processes and treating disease may change the quality and perhaps the length of your life.

Medical research leading to such results takes years of patient, often frustrating experimentation by many different teams throughout the public and private sectors of our scientific community. The tasks involved are not simple.

Advances in research stem from a partnership that includes federal agencies such as the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Alcohol, Drug Abuse and Mental Health Administration (ADAMHA), universities and teaching hospitals across America, and private industry laboratories. Each partner often works independently to acquire knowledge and test new concepts. They must build on the knowledge developed in all laboratories, and they often coordinate efforts in their search for answers.

Whether an idea originates in a university laboratory or starts with basic product research carried on in the private sector, important findings percolate through the entire scientific community, where each new finding serves as a building block to establish a deeper understanding of what we are and how we function.

Medical research is an expensive process. It needs steady funding for equipment and personnel—even when progress is slow. Government and industry often work with university-based scientists and the medical profession not only in the acquisition of new knowledge and the development of new treatments, but also in funding these advances.

Now more than ever, we all must do our part to help keep the flow of discoveries active and ongoing. If funding for medical research is reduced, major advances in knowledge about some of the most dreaded diseases facing us today could be delayed for years to come.

What can you do?

- *Speak up.* Let your legislators know that you want funding of biomedical research by NIH and other government agencies to be kept at the highest possible levels.
- *Contribute* to voluntary health organizations supporting disease research.

Research-based pharmaceutical companies such as Pfizer are also increasing their financial investment in research. For instance, in 1984 alone, pharmaceutical companies in the United States spent over 4 *billion* dollars on research and product development.

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For more information on the future of medical research in America, write to Health Research U.S.A., P.O. Box 3852 FR, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163.

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CORRESPONDENCE

DAMN YANKEES

To the editors:

Like Joseph Nocera ("My Life as a Texan," April 13), I was a temporary Texan. I was there during the heart of the boom, and to me the spending of money was more a celebration than a flaunting of wealth. There wasn't an insecurity about anything, even in the arts. The blindness Texans had about the source of their money and how long it would last was just part of a larger attitude of ignoring the poverty and pollution everywhere. In Houston, where trendy bars and barrios literally lay side by side, I was at first appalled by the irresponsibility for the have-nots. Then—not infrequently—some oilman would give an outrageous amount of money to the homeless family he'd seen on the news or would adopt the unadoptable six-year-old. These stories were every bit as awesome as those about flying to lunch in a helicopter.

I can't believe that "Texans have been permanently scarred." They haven't lost their sense of humor (look at *Texas Monthly*) or their open-armed acceptance of—everything. When I visited last year, my friends were running the air conditioner with the window open, "so we can have both," they explained nonchalantly. Texans believe in themselves and in the future, and know this irksome phase will pass.

SARAH WILSON
Gainesville, Florida

To the editors:

Not all whites in Alabama hate blacks. Not all Californians are weirdos. When Joseph Nocera observes that "Texas has lost its swagger," perhaps he's looking at a Texan who never swaggered in the first place. And now that he has opened the door to name-calling and stereotyping, I'd like to set the record straight. Mr. Nocera was never a Texan. He was a carpetbagger.

BONNIE SUDDERTH
Fort Worth, Texas

MEDIA'S FALSE LIGHT

To the editors:

On the evening of the president's recent televised address, I was traveling up Constitution Avenue to the Capitol when a large bank of spotlights north of the Senate wing caught my attention ("Welcome to the Rustbelt," TRB, March 30). I was told CBS had erected them for that evening's broadcast, to illuminate the Senate wing. Later I tuned in to see if that could really be true. Sure enough, Dan Rather and his minions were positioned in the top floor of a nearby office building, the Capitol at their back, the dome radiant against the nighttime sky. CBS's spotlights gave the Senate wing a warm glow. There's no doubt in my mind that CBS News producers believed those lights made them more competitive that evening, though they had as much to do with broadcast quality as ABC's guacamole dip does.

TOM BOETTCHER
Washington, D.C.

SLICK PLAN

To the editors:

In "Oil Slick" (April 13), TNR recommends a 25-cent per gallon increase in the gasoline tax that "would cost consumers about $25 billion a year," with the revenue going "to reduce the deficit or for other worthy purposes." True, a stiff tax would reduce our oil consumption somewhat, but even if reduction did reach the 400,000 barrels a day that the Energy Department suggests, it would not be much when compared with total U.S. demand, now more than 16 million barrels a day. And more revenue doesn't necessarily mean a smaller deficit. A gasoline tax would be regressive, hurting the poor disproportionately, and would unfairly penalize rural residents and motorists in the West and South, where the number of driving miles per capita is highest.

If Congress wants to do something about the energy situation, then it could: repeal the Windfall Profit tax, which is an excise tax only on domestic oil and is a powerful deterrent to oil exploration and development; remove government regulations preventing the efficient development and use of U.S. natural gas reserves; lift prohibitions on leasing and drilling in promising petroleum areas such as those off California and on Alaska's northeastern coastal plain.

ARTHUR E. WIESE
American Petroleum Institute
Washington, D.C.

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SPONTANEOUS COMBUSTION
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THE NEW REPUBLIC
MAY 11, 1987

SHELTER SKELTER

Federal housing programs have taken a beating from the Reagan revolution. The housing budget has been cut by more than three-quarters, from $30.2 billion to $7.8 billion. Reagan has all but eliminated the government's two largest programs for low-income apartment construction. Thanks to tax reform, the myriad deductions for the construction and rehabilitation of low- and moderate-income housing have been folded into a single, smaller, tax credit.

Where does that leave us? The government is adding 100,000 new subsidized housing units to the nation's stock each year, but that's less than a third of what it added each year during the '70s. Church, community, and other nonprofit private groups have stepped in to fill much of the gap, just as the president predicted they would. Such private projects, however, often make use of what government subsidies are still available—and even then they can't produce enough new buildings to meet the demand. The supply of low-income dwellings is expected to dwindle further within the next decade. Companies that accepted federal subsidies to build housing for the poor during the '70s retained the right to forfeit their subsidies and convert their buildings to higher-income dwellings. Soon many developers will become eligible to exercise this option, and there are no funds to replace the apartments they now provide.

Meanwhile, rental housing is getting harder to afford for growing numbers of Americans. For the poorest 20 percent of households, rent now takes up an average of about 40 percent of total income—a third more than the government considers reasonable. Many employers in booming suburbs find that low-wage workers who staff the new corporate villages can often only afford to live a two-hour bus ride away—which burdens the workers and means inefficiencies for their employers. Most alarming of all, the lack of affordable housing is a major factor in the growth of homelessness. According to the Partnership for the Homeless, the number of homeless families with children increased by 25 percent last winter.

Now that Reagan has razed the old federal housing programs, the Democrats have a chance to use their control over Congress to design a renovated structure of their own. What are they making of this opportunity? The Senate recently passed a housing bill that would shield remaining programs from the further cuts Reagan had planned for next year. But the bill protects such corporate welfare programs as Urban Development Action Grants. Meanwhile, House Speaker Jim Wright and others have trumpeted higher spending for homeless shelters, basically a band-aid, as a quick and easy way to establish their compassion credentials.

It's more important for Democrats to show they have learned from past welfare-state excesses. Helping low-income Americans find decent housing won't be cheap. But Democrats will have no reason to apologize for spending more if they spend it efficiently. Their social agenda is as worthy as ever. The point is to use market mechanisms to achieve these desirable goals.

In the past, market mechanisms usually have been defined as incentives—i.e., subsidies—for the private sector. Nothing got built for the poor unless the not-poor got a piece of the action. First there was public housing, then various mortgage subsidies and tax breaks to encourage middle-class homeownership (especially the mortgage interest deduction, a tax expenditure currently worth over $30 billion per year). In the '60s and '70s there was an explosion of tax breaks and subsidies designed to entice private builders to build low-income housing. Both forms of housing support—public housing and "incentives"—precipitated a lot of housing. But both spent a lot of taxpayer largess on the non-needy. In public housing, construction unions inflated building costs. In the case of incentives to the private sector (such as Section 8 subsidized housing), developers benefitted. In the case of tax-exempt municipal bonds used for housing, private investors and investment bankers got rich.

All the while, Congress never established an entitlement to housing benefits, as it did for medical care (through Medicaid) and nutrition (Food Stamps). This has meant that a lucky few renters get government subsidies, and those unlucky enough to be stuck on the waiting list get to wait. Currently only about 25 percent of very low-income fam-

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ilies receive some form of housing assistance. Meanwhile, many who have incomes slightly above the poverty line get in on some programs. And of course the mortgage interest deduction provides benefits in inverse proportion to need.

Ultimately housing will have to be addressed in the context of overall welfare policy. Single-parent families, many of them headed by black teenage mothers, are among the households that most commonly receive housing assistance under current law. Any solution to low-income housing problems would have to incorporate, or at least be compatible with, greater incentives for work and reduced dependency.

How should the government use the market? The best way to bolster the capacity of lower-income people to pay for housing is to put rent money in their hands. Vouchers are the most efficient way to do that. Each low-income tenant presents his landlord with a promise from the government to make up the difference between 30 percent of the tenant's income and the rent. Every dollar the government spends goes for shelter, not to pad the income of a developer. There are already two limited voucher programs under current law. The Reagan administration says it wants to see vouchers replace all current housing programs—but with the vital catch that they aren't willing to spend enough money on them. Even if you took all $7.8 billion currently being spent (and misspent) on housing and spread it evenly among the 13.7 million lowest-income households, it would only provide $570 worth of help per family per year. We can either spend more or continue reserving full benefits for the lucky few at the head of the waiting lists.

But even the most generous voucher isn't much use in a chronically tight housing market. This is where the supply side comes in. Ideally, every new unit of housing built, whether low-income or high-income, should open up a new space for a low-income renter. As a better-off person moves out of his old apartment, he frees it up for a poorer person to move in. The closer we get to a situation in which such a "chain of moves" can go on unobstructed, the greater the supply of low-income housing will be.

Eliminating obstructions, however, would mean shaking up arrangements that protect current homeowners and tenants. The most egregious is rent control. In New York, scene of the worst housing horror stories of recent years, rent control has stifled new construction. It helps a few tenants (most of whom aren't poor at all) at the expense of many more poor tenants who must contend with crumbling buildings and condo conversions. Another obstacle is zoning. Suburbs, fearful of the impact of low-income residents on their property values, keep out cheap multifamily dwellings by zoning their land for "low-density" use. This adds greatly to land costs, and hence the cost of developing low-income apartments in those areas. Rigid building codes create work for union electricians and plumbers but add to the cost of providing affordable living spaces. And one of the most intractable barriers to the free transfer of homes and apartments is still racial discrimination. We won't have decent housing for everyone until we have neighborhoods that are open to everyone.

NOTEBOOK

□ ONCE IN A LIFETIME: Funny? Gary Hart holds a Los Angeles fund-raiser for his 1988 presidential campaign, and federal marshals seize the $30,000 profit to pay off a debt from 1984. When I get through with Hart, says the enraged creditor, "a dog wouldn't vote for this guy." Hart's reaction was a characteristically uptight lecture about the legal distinction between his 1984 and 1988 campaign committees. Be that as it may, Hart's 1984 debt is becoming a major political problem for him. But it's also a problem for us. A person who ran a strong second for the nomination of a party that went on to lose the election is exactly the sort of person that party might wish to consider in the next round. Yet such a person is almost certain to be burdened by multimillion-dollar campaign debts. Under the rules, he is *forbidden* to pay them off from his own pocket, *forbidden* to solicit amounts over $1,000, and *forbidden* to turn to previous contributors who've already given the maximum. He's stuck. We already have a political system that rewards novelty and punishes experience in so many ways. Do we really want to add a rule that says, in effect: You can only run for president once in your life?

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

JUST SAYING NO

PRESIDENT REAGAN'S favorite target in self-effacing humor these days is his style of White House management. "It's true hard work never killed anybody, but I figure why take the chance," he said at the Gridiron Club dinner on March 28. The joke came at an odd time, right when Reagan was working overtime to sustain his veto of the $88 billion highway bill. Four days later, he sat in Air Force One on the runway at Andrews Air Force Base and made phone calls to Capitol Hill in search of support. The next morning he showed up early at the Oval Office (8:30 a.m.) for breakfast with wavering senators. The breakfast never took place, but Reagan traveled to the Senate later that morning to make a final plea in person. He lost the vote, 67-33.

Don't cry for a crippled presidency. It was a tactical defeat but a strategic victory. Howard Baker, the White House chief of staff, had been skeptical about the impromptu Reagan visit to the Senate. But at the senior staff meeting the morning after the vote, he changed his tune. "The president demonstrated his political judgment was right," Baker said. The rest of the staff quickly fell into line. "The consensus is we won that one even when we lost the vote," says a senior official. "It showed an activist president willing to get involved." In chatting with reporters during Reagan's Santa Barbara vacation for ten days over Easter, presidential aides adopted a shorthand phrase

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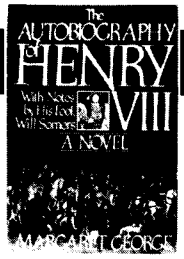

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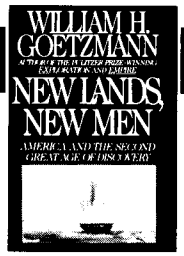

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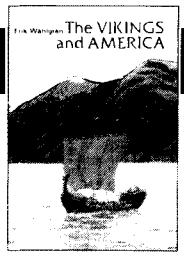

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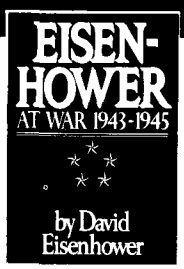

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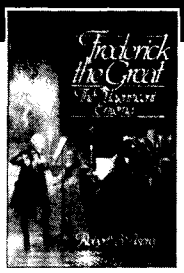

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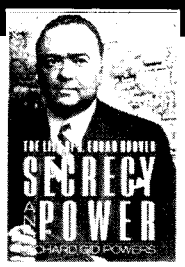

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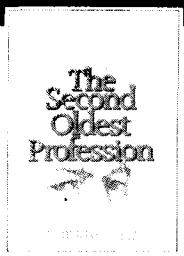

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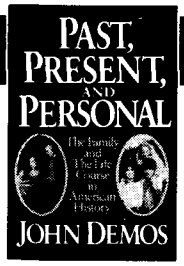

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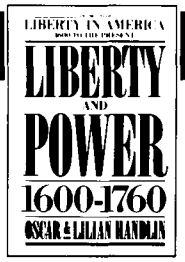

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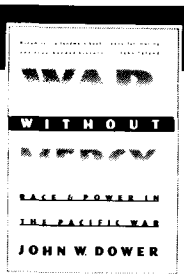

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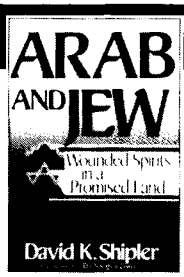

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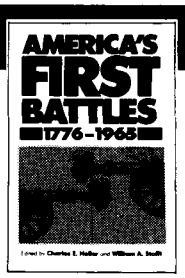

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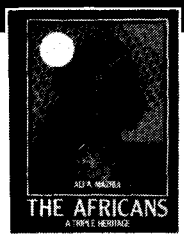

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for this. "Reagan's back," they said, ad nauseam.

He is, after a fashion. Reagan's popularity hasn't rebounded, but he has set himself up for a clash with Congress over spending. And if the clash goes well for him, if his vetoes are sustained repeatedly, the next step is a budget summit with Congress at which a grand compromise might be reached—a tax increase that doesn't involve individual rate hikes, deeper cuts in domestic spending, reform of the budget process. Reagan hasn't yet mustered the clout to risk a summit. If he had one now, he'd merely subject himself to pressure for higher taxes. The plan is first to go toe-to-toe with Congress on spending bills—the veto strategy—and worry later about a big compromise.

The strategy sounds like old hat, but it's new. Reagan has been criticizing federal spending for decades, but as president his denunciations proved to be so much bluster. He's been reluctant to veto spending bills. In six years he's vetoed 55 bills. President Ford vetoed 66 in less than three years. President Eisenhower had 181 vetoes in eight years, President Truman 250 in seven. Why Reagan's reluctance? Though nobody likes the deficit, spending bills are popular. If they weren't, they wouldn't pass. And Reagan is always wary of confrontation. "He'd rather negotiate and end up with something he can swallow," says an aide. That's what he did routinely when Republicans held the Senate for the first six years of his presidency. Now, with Democrats in charge of both houses, he's lost the upper hand in negotiations. This means he has to fall back on the only leverage he's got left, the veto.

Two things have encouraged Reagan's aides to believe they can win a veto battle. One was the highway veto episode. The aides believe the White House performed clumsily and still lost by only a single vote on a very popular bill. "Once the decision was made to veto it, what you found

THE ZEITGEIST CHECKLIST

BY CHARLES PAUL FREUND

This Week		Last Week	Weeks on Chart
1.	LOOK MA, NO ARMS	—	1
2.	OUT OF AFRICA	4	15
3.	THE CHIPS ARE DOWN	*	7
4.	TALK DIRTY TO ME	—	1
5.	THE BUCK STARTS HERE	—	1
6.	THE LONELY CROWD	6	9
7.	AND JUSTICE FOR ED	*	3
8.	WHITE-OUT	*	2
9.	WELL, WHAT DO YOU KNOW?	—	1
10.	NEW, IMPROVED LIES	*	2

1. LOOK MA, NO ARMS

Arms control. The prospect of a nuclear-free Europe isn't exactly causing dancing in the streets. Doubts about Reagan's treaty-making competence are openly expressed, and there is a widespread sense that the U.S. has been hoisted by its own ill-considered proposal. Some are already referring to the MAD nuclear embrace as the stable good old days. As for last week's espionage obsession, never mind.

2. OUT OF AFRICA

AIDS. Forget the AIDS-free dating services; there's evidence of a *new*, mutant AIDS virus in Africa. Meanwhile, the first one is threatening Kenya's economy. Tourism is important there. The British army has declared *Mombasa* off-limits due to AIDS fear, and thousands of panicked Europeans have canceled their Kenya vacations.

3. THE CHIPS ARE DOWN

Competitiveness. Dispatches from the trade war run along two themes. First, victory: the Japanese are startled that we not only talk tough, we've acted tough. Hell, the Koreans are already running for cover. Second, you're not even drafted. The only item that's expected to get more expensive is a lap computer.

4. TALK DIRTY TO ME

Shock radio. The FCC's slap at the highly successful, and highly raunchy, Shock Jock radio format is being seen as a retreat from that agency's laissez-faire years under Fowler. Maybe. It's a pretty good example of capitalism's cultural contradictions, though, and the bind of "conservative" leadership. What do such leaders do when the marketplace they revere opts for values they despise?

5. THE BUCK STARTS HERE

The economy. Deficits, exchange rates, and the Wall Street roller coaster may be just so many news items to most people, but interest rates you can feel in your wallet. Now that they're moving up, the "soft economy" will become less background blather and more of a real issue.

6. THE LONELY CROWD

1988. There may be a record number of candidates (up to 32), but so many apparent heavyweights have declined to run that the question of campaign brutality (ZC, March 16) is back. Kemp, meanwhile, is planning to start his TV campaign *this year*, while the ad trades give Simon a plus for *not* looking blow-dried.

7. AND JUSTICE FOR ED

Meese. Between Meese's alleged blocking of Justice's Iranamok probe, his Wedtech actions, and now his Passover effort to sneak Karl Linnas into Panama, he emerges as the leading candidate for administration bogeyman. That role has gone unfilled since Regan's resignation. Once recast, the dynamics of the now-slumbering White House coverage will likely change.

8. WHITE-OUT

South Africa. New anti-protest measures by South Africa have highlighted an instructive phenomenon: the government's emergency measures have successfully *lowered* consciousness on apartheid. Out of (TV) sight, etc., South Africa provides an unusually stark example of media manipulation, and awareness stimulus-and-response, by opposing sides on a hot issue.

9. WELL, WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

Education. Higher education's chronic identity crisis has flared up. The value of SAT scores is under debate, while schools are reshuffling curricula and wondering, What should educated persons know? Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind* charges U.S. education with being a valueless failure, and E. D. Hirsch's *Cultural Illiteracy* is the apotheosis of a newspaper perennial: that Americans know hardly anything.

10. NEW, IMPROVED LIES

"Liar" ads. In Joey Isuzu's wake come real-life "liars." A new, "unbelievable" ice cream is using "unbelievable" shills. Joining psychics and UFO contactees as an endorser is John Ehrlichman, who "never knew a thing about the Watergate break-in." Ad campaigns have run out of claims, and bald-faced lying is titillating. Next: lying claymation raisins.

*Item resurfaces in the Zeitgeist after at least one week's absence.

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was a lack of action on the part of those [in the White House] who ought to be players," says a senior aide. Reagan kept talking about his alternative bill, but there wasn't one. "There wasn't an alternative for anyone to see," the aide says. "You couldn't get it out of OMB. I think there's some laziness around here. People haven't been pushed to produce." The highway veto was a worst-case scenario come true. To remedy this, the legislative strategy group began gathering daily at the White House before the Easter break. Faced with a full-blown Reagan veto drive, the aide says, some of the 11 Republicans who voted for the highway override wouldn't dare buck Reagan again.

A week after the highway vote, Reagan aides turned their attention to the House. Without Republican unity, a veto strategy would not be plausible. The test was the budget resolution pushed by Democratic leaders that calls for an $18 billion tax boost. Will Ball, the president's lobbyist on Capitol Hill, figured at least 150 Republicans and probably more had to vote against the resolution. Anything short of that would be evidence of GOP chaos. As it turned out, House Republicans voted 173-0 against the resolution. Ball was thrilled.

Budget resolutions don't come to the White House for signature or veto, but Reagan has plenty of veto prospects. He may have lucked out on the bill to spend $500 million on the homeless. The Senate version requires that the money be taken from another, unspecified program. This means the money may never be spent. It also means that Reagan will sign the homeless bill if it retains the offset provision. Who wants to be against the homeless? A certain veto is the supplemental appropriations bill, to which several arms control limitations have been attached in the House (abide by SALT II, only small nuclear tests, restricted anti-satellite testing). The White House budget office sent Congress a 25-page paper opposing the bill.

Reagan can hardly get around a veto of the housing bill. It ponies up $38.3 billion for subsidized housing, and that's just in the Senate version that passed 71-27 on March 31. "It's bound to get worse when the House gets hold of it," says a senior official. There's also a banking bill that White House aides think they can exploit by veto. It would rescue some savings and loans in Texas whose cause House Speaker Jim Wright has championed. In short, there's plenty to veto. But the White House wants to pick only the bills on which Republicans are united in opposition. "You want to put out vetoes your own party supports," says an official. The nagging question about the strategy is Reagan's will. He's still making threats about vetoing a tax increase. He hasn't said much in private about waging a veto war against spending bills.

Assuming that Reagan goes ahead with veto after veto and is successful, then comes the tricky part. Before Baker arrived as chief of staff on March 1, the notion of a grand compromise with Congress on taxes and spending was not on the president's agenda. The last time formal talks with Congress were held on the subject was 1983, and those negotiations fell through. Now the compromise is on the agenda, tentatively. Baker is keen on including budget reform, including a new method for enforcing Gramm-Rudman deficit targets, in a compromise package. That's the easy part, and even here the Defense Department and State Department are balking, fearful they'll suffer deeper spending reductions if Gramm-Rudman becomes enforceable. Getting Reagan to accept a tax hike and Congress to sign off on fresh cuts in domestic programs is the hard part. So the odds are long. But no longer is a grand compromise inconceivable.

FRED BARNES

POSTCARD NORTHAMPTON

AMY'S DAY

ON THE last day of the Trespassing Trial of the Century I saw someone in the Hampshire County courtroom who looked familiar. He was a tall, skinny kid with a head of ostentatiously unkempt hair and wire-rimmed glasses. He wore a pair of tattered blue jeans, a wrinkled shirt, sneakers, and a hunting jacket at least two sizes too large. He eschewed the buttons proclaiming that the 15 defendants were putting "the CIA on trial." His badge was his reporter's notebook. When Abbie Hoffman strode into the courtroom, working it like a political convention, he hovered in the background.

"This is my mother," said Abbie, gesturing to a quiet white-haired woman. "What's her name?" someone asked. "Mom," replied Abbie, displaying that rapier wit for which he had become so famous in Northampton. When Amy Carter walked into the courtroom, surrounded by cameramen and photographers, the young reporter ostentatiously ignored her and found a seat instead. He never noticed the older guy who was looking at him oddly. The older guy, of course, was me. So was the younger guy. That was me 15 years ago.

It was nostalgia time at the Hampshire County Courthouse. Here in the cynical 1980s, Amy, Abbie, and the other 13 co-defendants had been arrested for occupying a building on the UMass-Amherst campus. They had done so, they said, to prevent the CIA from recruiting on campus. If the prosecutor had had an instinct for the jugular, she might have made more of the fact that the CIA recruiter had come and gone ten days before the protest. But never mind. Each day when the giant doors closed, it felt as though we had all taken a trip in Mr. Peabody's time machine.

Here was Abbie Hoffman, a little the worse for wear, with his 50-year-old beer belly, but still ready to raise a clenched fist at the drop of a hackneyed slogan. "I've been to Birmingham," he said at the time of his arrest last November, "and I've been to Selma. But I've never seen police as bad as this!" There was very little he would not say if it would get him on the evening news. When the camera was on, so was Abbie. Here was Leonard Weinglass, of Chicago Seven fame, lead-

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the five lawyers at the defense table. (Hoffman was deding himself, and got to sit up with the lawyers.)

Here was a roomful of people with political tracts under their arms, holes in their jeans, and a seriousness of purpose out of proportion to the event, which resembled an old-fashioned Vietnam teach-in. Up on the podium—oops, I mean the witness stand—stood an array of "expert" witnesses: Daniel Ellsberg, Howard Zinn, Morton Halperin, Ramsey Clark, and a raft of other '60s heroes. And from their mouths came all the great old phrases: "the crimes of the CIA," "American imperialism," you name it.

One afternoon earlier in the trial Daniel Ellsberg was on the stand. Whatever you think of Ellsberg for leaking the Pentagon Papers (I still believe it was an act of genuine heroism), there is something just a little pathetic about the way he has been dining off them for the past 16 years. Now, under the gentle prodding of the defense counsel, he recalled that fateful day when he had attended a meeting of the War Resisters' League, and realized that he had to do something to stop the war. "I sat in a corner of the bathroom," he recalled pleasantly, "tears streaming down my cheeks." He knew from firsthand experience that the CIA was evil; the agency had once tried to kill him. He knew that modern-day protest still had influence because "those of us who put our bodies so close to ground zero a year ago" had caused a bill to be introduced in Congress that would end nuclear testing. The jurors looked a little befuddled; the students nodded enthusiastically.

Oh, yes, and he was testifying in his capacity as an "expert." "Now," came the soft-ball question, "as an expert on the government decision-making process, have you studied decision-making concerning the *contras*?"

"Yes, I have," began Ellsberg with a small smile. "I feel like I am reliving the events of 1969 all over again when I read about the *contras*."

"Do you have an expert opinion on what effect protests have had on the situation in Nicaragua?"

"I believe," replied the expert, "from all my past experience, that if 50,000 Americans had not resisted the draft since 1980, we would have American troops in Nicaragua."

Afterward, outside the courtroom, there was quite a little scene. At the bottom of the steps stood former *contra* leader Edgar Chamorro, dressed in a gray European-cut suit, recounting his testimony to a clutch of microphones. "The CIA funded the *contras*," he said again and again. A few feet away stood Ellsberg, also speaking into the microphones. ("I just sat on the floor and cried. . . .") Nearby, Howard Zinn, with a Zen-like expression on his face, talked quietly to Leonard Weinglass. "The nice thing," he said, "is they've really let this trial be about the issues." Weinglass nodded sagely, and then in the manner of leftist lawyers everywhere began to complain about the judge. An overenthusiastic young man stuck yet another microphone under Ellsberg's nose. "Dr. Ellsberg," he asked loudly, "doesn't it hurt your credibility when you say that the CIA tried to kill you *only once*?" Even Ellsberg looked embarrassed.

Was there ever any doubt that the 15 trespassers would be found not guilty? I, for one, doubted it right up until the end. So did most of the other oddsmakers in the press box. But we underestimated three "givens." The first was the judge's willingness to let the defense do just about anything it wanted. Remember when judges refused to allow "political" evidence in so-called political trials? Remember the battles that raged between those tough judges and leftist lawyers? This judge was a pussycat, caring mostly about decorum in his courtroom (a lost cause), and (presumably) not being overturned on appeal. His attitude led not only to the appearance of Ellsberg, Zinn, et al., but also to the use of the "necessity" defense. What's that? Say you're walking by a house and you see it being robbed. You break in and scare away the burglar. Under the necessity defense, even though you may have committed the crime of trespassing, you are not guilty because you prevented a larger wrong. In the case at hand, it was said, the trespassers had to commit their crime to prevent the larger crimes of the CIA.

The second given was that the CIA really had committed unspeakable crimes throughout the world. The prosecutor, Diane Fernald, not long out of law school, never challenged the basic assumptions of the defense, never questioned any of the "crimes," or the credibility of the "experts." Thus the third given: the defense had better lawyers, particularly Weinglass.

During the final argument Fernald tried vainly to turn the trial back into a trespassing case. But too much had already transpired. So she found herself saying things like, "Even if the defendants' actions did prevent crimes by the CIA, it doesn't justify their own crimes." And: "Even if their actions might prevent a war, it doesn't justify what they did." It doesn't? I may not be a radical anymore, but even I can't imagine a better justification for trespassing.

THE AMY FACTOR weighed heavily on everyone at the trial, a reminder (as if it were needed) of how powerful a thing celebrityhood is. The conventional wisdom was that Amy's willingness to put up with the press made her a candidate for canonization. It seems to me that she knew precisely what she was doing when she lent her fame to this trial. She was the reason we were all there, and though she complained that the reporters didn't attend the UMass teach-ins every night, she certainly could not charge that the "issues" weren't getting aired. There was Matthew Wald, writing in the pages of the *New York Times* about the "illegal activities of the CIA," and when is the last time you can remember that happening? Amy Carter understands the power she has, and is willing to use it for what she believes in. The price is that she gets her picture taken a lot. It doesn't seem too terribly onerous.

Still, you can't help admiring her a little. At least she believes in something. Better that she spend her time protesting against the CIA than angling for a lucrative summer internship at First Boston. Besides, radical political views aren't such a bad thing for a 19-year-old to have. Almost everyone I knew in college held similar views, and they are probably the better for it. Their radical politics grew eventually into more conventional (and in some cases, conservative) views, but those positions have authority because

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they did not come automatically. The big difference between us and Amy Carter is that we were allowed to grow out of our radical politics in private.

When the jurors pronounced Amy "Not Guilty," the courtroom erupted in squeals of joy. The judge, infuriated by this unconscionable breach of decorum, stormed off the bench and demanded that the courtroom be cleared. Afterward there was a press conference on the steps of the courthouse. Abbie Hoffman, in a typical act of radical defiance, ripped off his tie and held it high. Amy Carter smiled sweetly. There were chants of "Lennie, Lennie!" in honor of the real hero of this trial. Some of the cops smiled, and one whispered to another, "Ballsy verdict." Even the prosecutor didn't seem particularly upset. Everybody was having a terrific time, and really, that's what the Trespassing Trial of the Century was about. It was an oldie but goodie. I'll bet the post-verdict party was great.

JOSEPH NOCERA

Joseph Nocera is the executive editor of *New England Monthly.*

THE MONEY CULTURE

BEATLES BUY-OUT

THERE IS a revolution afoot, according to the Nike shoe company—a revolution in sneakers, heralded by a $7 million TV ad campaign featuring the Beatles song "Revolution." It's the first time that Capitol Records has licensed an original Beatles record for use in a TV commercial. The 30-second ads, done in a black-and-white documentary style, feature ordinary jocks intercut with sports superstars such as basketball player Michael Jordan and tennis champion John McEnroe, while John Lennon sings, "You say you want a revolution." The new sneakers cost $75 a pair.

Beatles fans are outraged. Chris Morris, the *L.A. Reader*'s rock critic, says: "When 'Revolution' came out in 1968 I was getting teargassed in the streets of Madison. That song is part of the sound track of my political life. It bugs the hell out of me that it has been turned into a shoe ad." Morris is right that the Beatles' purpose was not to sell shoes. But the story is a bit more complicated.

The 1968 song *criticized* young revolutionaries for having "minds that hate." Lennon's lyrics told the 1960s left to "count me out." They attacked kids for "carrying pictures of Chairman Mao." The New Left was shocked when the song first appeared. *Ramparts* called it a "betrayal," and the *New Left Review* denounced it as "a lamentable petty bourgeois cry of fear."

"Revolution" was John Lennon's comment on May '68. It was recorded two weeks after student riots in Paris brought France to the brink of revolution. The song wasn't released until August. By that time, a thousand club-swinging New York City cops had driven Columbia University students from occupied campus buildings. In Chicago Hubert Humphrey had been "nominated in a sea of blood," as Theodore White put it. The Rolling Stones released "Street Fighting Man," in which Mick Jagger sang about the time being right for revolution; the record was banned from the airwaves in Chicago and Berkeley. Then the new Beatles single came out, addressing the kids in the streets: "You say you want a revolution . . ."

The underground press responded immediately. The Berkeley *Barb* wrote with typical excess, " 'Revolution' sounds like the hawk plank adopted in the Chicago convention of the Democratic Death Party." Jon Landau, writing for Liberation News Service, agreed: "Hubert Humphrey couldn't have said it better," he wrote. Robert Christgau wrote in the *Village Voice*, "It is puritanical to expect musicians, or anyone else, to hew to the proper line. But it is reasonable to request that they not go out of their way to oppose it. Lennon has, and it takes much of the pleasure out of their music for me." *Ramparts* objected in particular to the line "you know it's gonna be all right": "It isn't," the magazine declared. "You *know* it's *not* gonna be all right."

But the song was irresistible, raucous hard rock. The music contained a message of its own, a message of excitement and freedom, which worked against the "sterility and repression in the lyrics," according to Greil Marcus, at the time a writer for the San Francisco *Express-Times*. "The music doesn't say 'cool it' or 'don't fight the cops,' " Marcus wrote.

There was a second version of the song, released on the White Album two months after the single. The single version had been produced the way Paul McCartney wanted it; the album version was done John's way—slower, so that the words could be understood better. And there was one significant change in the words: after he sang, "When you talk about destruction / Don't you know that you can count me out," he added "in." "I put in both because I wasn't sure," he explained. Nike uses the first version in the ad.

Not everyone on the left attacked "Revolution." The SDS newspaper at Cornell declared that Lennon rightly rejected radicals with "minds that hate," and that the increasing violence of the left needed to be criticized. Then there was the issue of the "shoo-be-do-wahs" with which Paul and George answered John's "You know it's gonna be—" on the album version. Michael Wood addressed that problem in *Commonweal*. The Beatles are not fools, he argued; they know it's absurd to say "it's gonna be all right." The "shoo-be-do-wahs" suggested "they mean that statements about whether it is or it isn't are all part of that political crap they dislike so much."

The far right also took up the question of "Revolution." William Buckley paid mocking tribute to its message in his syndicated column, and was promptly attacked by the John Birch Society. "The Beatles are simply telling the Maoists that Fabian gradualism is working, and that the Maoists might blow it all by getting the public excited before things are ready for 'revolution'—'it's gonna be all

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right.' " The Birch Society concluded that " 'Revolution' takes the Moscow line against Trotskyites and the Progressive Labor Party, based on Lenin's *Left-Wing Extremism: An Infantile Disorder*." (The actual title of Lenin's treatise was: *Left-Wing Communism, An Infantile Disorder*.)

LENNON AND McCARTNEY gave up ownership of their songs in the late '60s when their financial advisers told them they could reduce their tax payments (they were in Britain's 90 percent bracket) by forming a corporation called Northern Songs that would own their copyrights, and selling stock to the public. In 1969 Sir Lew Grade's entertainment conglomerate ATV Music offered seven times the original offering price of the Northern Songs stock in a takeover bid. Lennon and McCartney were feuding at the time and unable to organize a successful counteroffer. When the Northern Songs management and shareholders accepted Sir Lew's offer in September 1969, Lennon was outraged and inconsolable. Told that his massive capital gain would allow him to make his children secure—or, in the words of the poet, "Baby you're a rich man now"—Lennon replied, "I have no desire to create another fucking aristocracy." Grade in turn sold ATV in 1981 to an Australian tycoon with too many names: Robert Holmes a Court.

Enter Michael Jackson, whose 1982 *Thriller* album sold more than 30 million copies, making it the most successful album in the history of the world. After working with McCartney on the monster hit "Say, Say, Say," he told his lawyer, "I want to buy some copyrights, like Paul." "He only wanted songs that meant a lot to him," Robert Hilburn explained in the *Los Angeles Times*, so he bought Dion's "Runaround Sue" and "The Wanderer" but passed on Kris Kristofferson's "Help Me Make It Through the Night." But what he really wanted was the Beatles. Jackson appeared in person at the negotiations in London, wearing a colorful Sgt. Pepper outfit. That "brightened everyone's mood," Hilburn reports, and Holmes a Court agreed to sell—for $47.5 million. After agreeing to license the words and music of "Revolution" to Nike, Jackson persuaded Capitol Records, owner of the rights to the Beatles' recordings, to license the original record.

The "Revolution" ad is the most outrageous example of a familiar aspect of pop culture in the later Age of Reagan. Lou Reed, a rock hero loved for his rejection of everything soft and safe in the pop world, recently licensed his signature song, "Walk on the Wild Side," for a motor scooter ad. The Shirelles' captivating "Dedicated to the One I Love" (it peaked at No. 3 in 1961) is now used to suggest that if you are dedicated, you should serve bran flakes to the one you love. Johnny Nash's stirring "I Can See Clearly Now," one of the first reggae hits (No. 1 in 1972), sells—oh no—window cleaner. "Revolution" isn't even the first Beatles song to be licensed. John Lennon's "Help," a declaration of his unhappiness as a superstar, became a Mercury ad in 1985. But a sound-alike band sang the song. And Michael Jackson does Pepsi commercials.

"Mack the Knife," once sung by Lotte Lenya in "The Threepenny Opera," lyrics by Bertolt Brecht, music by Kurt Weill, has been turned into a McDonald's commercial: "It's Mac Tonight." Frank Sinatra licensed his original recording of "The Best Is Yet to Come" to Chrysler. Ringo Starr, meanwhile, is the first Beatle to appear in person endorsing a product—a pathetic ad for a wine cooler.

A few rockers have had the integrity to refuse to license their music. Notable among them are John Cougar Mellencamp, Bob Seger, and Joan Jett. Chrissie Hynde of the Pretenders has a song on their new album *Get Close* attacking Michael Jackson and others who have endorsed products, in which she asks, "How much did you get for your soul?" Bruce Springsteen has been offered the most to sell out, and he has refused. The admen, however, have taken revenge, expropriating Springsteen's style and attitude and reducing them to a formula for a variety of commercials. After The Boss turned down Lee Iacocca's offer to use "Born in the USA" to sell Plymouth Mini-Vans, the company ran a rip-off TV ad with the theme "Born in America." (As Dave Marsh points out in his new book on Springsteen, *Glory Days*, the car is assembled in Canada.)

WHAT'S NEXT? "Give Peace a Chance" selling Star Wars? "Happiness is a Warm Gun" licensed to the National Rifle Association? "All You Need Is Love" as the *contras*' theme song? Yoko Ono says she's confident Michael Jackson would "say 'no' to any misuse of the songs." He's turned down dozens of offers before accepting Nike. And neither Ono nor McCartney objected to Jackson's licensing of "Revolution" for the Nike ad. "John's songs should not be part of a cult of glorified martyrdom," Ono argues. "They should be enjoyed by kids today. This ad is a way to communicate John's song to them, to make it part of their lives instead of a relic of the distant past." She argues also that there is nothing objectionable about Nike shoes: "Sports shoes are part of fitness consciousness that is actually better for your body than some of the things we were doing in the '60s."

Maybe there's no reason to object to turning some pop songs into commercials—they didn't say anything in particular, and were written to make money in the first place. Does anyone care that the Fifth Dimension's "Up, Up, and Away" (No. 7 in 1967) has become a TWA commercial? But the "Revolution" ad is different. The song had a meaning that Nike is destroying.

A spokesman for Michael Jackson says that he plans to make 40 other Beatles songs available for commercial exploitation.

JON WIENER

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Editors' note: TNR *was refused permission to reprint the entire lyrics to "Revolution" by Lennon and McCartney on the grounds that this article would offend Nike.*

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Gorbachev's latest offer.

FINAL REDUCTIONS

Be careful above all things not to let go of the atomic weapon until you are sure, and more than sure, that other means of preserving the peace are in your hand. —Winston Churchill, to a Joint Session of Congress (January 1952)

On the surface, the Euromissile deal being hatched between the United States and the Soviet Union looks like a clean win for our side. Mikhail Gorbachev is agreeing to dismantle 300 SS-20 missiles and 112 SS-4s, with nearly 1,000 warheads capable of reaching targets all over Western Europe; the United States will give up 108 Pershing II and 208 cruise missiles with 316 warheads. Gorbachev is accepting the U.S. zero-option proposal, once seen as an impossible offer designed to sink arms control. He has also dropped the Soviet stance that there could be no Euromissile deal while the United States pursued the Strategic Defense Initiative. He seems to be backing down on the traditional Soviet refusal to permit on-site inspections to verify arms control. And, in response to U.S. concerns that eliminating medium-range missiles would leave the Soviets with 140 short-range missiles and the United States with none, Gorbachev offered to pull them out, too.

Despite promises to consult with the Europeans on the last part of this deal, the Reagan administration seems hell-bent to close an agreement in principle at Geneva in May, negotiate verification details over the summer, and schedule a summit for early fall to sign the deal. An INF deal will represent a vindication of tough Reaganite negotiating tactics: in 1983, when the Soviets walked out of talks to protest plans to deploy Pershing IIs in Europe, the administration plowed ahead despite calls from nuclear freeze advocates to delay deployment. Reagan beat the Soviets when they and European leftists tried to block deployment, and now the Soviets are accepting his proposal. Had Reagan and the allies not persevered, the Soviets now would have at least 1,100 Euromissiles and the West zero.

The INF deal also will be a vindication of the basic Reagan approach to arms control, which is to seek reduction or elimination of weapons rather than mere limits on deployments. But unless there are significant concessions soon on both sides, this may be the only major arms deal the administration gets in eight years. In the START talks in Geneva, it has succeeded in getting the Soviets to agree in principle to significant reductions in strategic arms. Whereas Nixon's SALT I and Carter's SALT II capped the growth of the Soviet arsenal at such high levels that the U.S.S.R. has been able to work on a first-strike capability against the United States, the Reagan administration has won a tentative agreement that the Soviets will roughly cut in half their numbers of strategic launchers, total warheads, and warheads carried by heavy missiles.

During his latest visit to Moscow, Secretary of State George Shultz tried to get Gorbachev to agree to a sublimit of 4,800 ballistic missile warheads (down from about 9,000), but Gorbachev wouldn't do it. "He has a thing against sublimits," one negotiator said. "He expressed contempt for negotiators in Geneva, his own as well as ours. He said that sublimits are complex, whereas he wants something simple. Of course, sublimits mean reductions in the most destabilizing systems. He wants those systems because he has the advantage."

There is resistance to a START deal on the U.S. side, too, because the Soviets want limitations on Star Wars, which the administration is not willing to give. As one official put it, "About four months ago, Cap Weinberger suddenly realized we were getting someplace in Geneva, and ever since then, he's been a bear, objecting to everything, throwing up flak and static, raising the ante. I'm convinced Richard Perle is not the problem. . . . He offers constructive proposals all the time. The problem is not Richard, it's Cap." One of Weinberger's successes has been to cut the proffered U.S. moratorium on Star Wars deployment from ten years to five, assuming the Soviets will cut their ballistic missile arsenal in half, instead of eliminating it as the United States proposed last July.

It's entirely possible that Gorbachev could arrive at an INF signing summit and pull another Reykjavik—make a simple, sweeping offer on START and SDI—that will make an agreement possible this time. U.S. officials are working out their own SDI ideas to be presented to President Reagan in the event the Soviets agree to deep cuts in ballistic missile warheads. So there may yet be a strategic arms deal, but officials say that if it isn't signed by the end of this year, it will be difficult to get it ratified by the Senate before the administration leaves office. Right now, it looks as though INF will be the only deal that Reagan gets.

But just as it's about closed, some highly reputable and moderate people are raising doubts. They include Henry Kissinger, former White House security adviser Brent Scowcroft, NATO commander Bernard Rogers, House Armed Services Committee chairman Les Aspin, and former Secretary of Defense Harold Brown. These are not enemies of arms control, but sensible advocates and practitioners of it. Their objections have individual nuances, but they boil down to two: (1) that the agreement puts NATO on the slippery slope to a denuclearized Europe that will be menaced by vastly superior Warsaw Pact conventional forces, and (2) that the pullout of U.S. missiles will decouple the United States from Europe, raising questions about whether the United States would risk its own destruction if the Soviets invaded Europe.

It is practically unthinkable that the administration would drop the INF deal because of these objections, or that the Senate would refuse to ratify an agreement if Reagan signed one. But the objectors do raise legitimate alarms that NATO needs to find a way around.

Gorbachev, for example, almost certainly will try to advance the long-standing Soviet objective of abolishing all nuclear weapons from Europe. He is likely to propose next that NATO and the Warsaw Pact eliminate thousands of tactical nuclear weapons (mainly artillery shells) that are

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close to the East-West border, might be captured or destroyed early in a war, and, therefore, might create an incentive for nuclear escalation. This will be a popular argument in Europe, especially in West Germany, where most of the weapons would go off.

Just how eager West Germany is to be rid of nuclear weapons is illustrated by Bonn's reaction to a proposal that instead of eliminating all short-range missiles, the United States and Soviets agree to an equal level that the United States would build up to. According to U.S. officials, the Germans said it would be impossible to win public support for any new deployments. That's why the United States is so close to accepting Gorbachev's offer to eliminate all his missiles in the 300-600 mile range.

For Europe to be denuclearized means the end of the NATO doctrine of "flexible response"—the threat that a Soviet conventional attack would be met by a U.S. nuclear response. If tactical as well as intermediate-range missiles were removed, the United States still could threaten to hit the Soviets with Europe-based bombers or with submarine-launched ballistic missiles and cruise missiles, but the Europeans traditionally have felt better when protected by weapons deployed on land. They have not at all trusted U.S. promises of a strategic strike on the Soviet Union from the United States in the event of an attack in Europe. Even the stationing of 250,000 American soldiers in Europe has been insufficient reassurance. So denuclearization and decoupling are twin threats to NATO solidarity.

If the NATO alliance is to hold together, some deep thinking needs to be done about deterring war without tactical, short-range, or medium-range systems. Harold Brown and some administration officials advocate introducing a new missile with a range below "short range"—that is, less than 300 miles—as a replacement for tactical weapons.

But the United States and its allies also need to move on conventional defense and arms control. The first step should be a realistic appraisal of the balance of forces and the cost for the West to mount a truly dependable conventional defense of Europe. Some experts think that by building barrier defenses along the border (such as buried pipes that could be filled with high explosives in time of crisis) and developing highest technology anti-tank weaponry, the costs would not necessarily be astronomical—perhaps one additional percent of GNP for each of the European allies.

Senator Sam Nunn, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, has proposed that the United States now also get serious about conventional arms control, offering a nuclear "no first use" pledge as long as the Soviets avoid massing tank power, and a withdrawal of two U.S. divisions from Germany if the Soviets withdraw 13 divisions from Eastern Europe. Gorbachev has hinted that he might be willing to consider a conventional stand-down, and the United States should pursue the opening. The Reagan administration's successful example with Euromissiles suggests, though, that the way to get any arms reductions out of the Soviets is to resolve to build up one's own weapons strength.

MORTON KONDRACKE

'Just sign right here, sir.'

AUTOPEN PRESIDENCY

THE AUTOPEN is an unprepossessing contraption about the size of a typewriter table. Many congressional and Cabinet offices have them, and almost any idiot can operate one. You turn it on with a key, slide a sheet of paper under the mechanical arm, press a button (or a foot pedal), and out comes a VIP signature. It looks official—not authentic enough to withstand close examination by an alert layman, but real enough to fool some of the people all of the time.

There has been a presidential autopen since the 1950s. It is hidden away in the basement of the Old Executive Office Building, the White House being loath to advertise its existence. In past administrations the autopen was used primarily to sign announcements and form letters, the sorts of routine correspondence that assure the president's political supporters they have not been forgotten. In the Reagan White House, it has been given a heavy workout. Just as the president has avoided mental exhaustion by allowing the government to run on autopilot, so he has avoided writer's cramp by having the motorized wrist sign reams of letters and a gallery-full of autographed photographs.

When Reagan took office, his advisers could not help but notice that there were people eager to abuse the president's name. Early on the White House was besieged by jelly bean companies demanding to know which brand was the president's favorite. White House lawyers prudently declared that they would allow no candy company to lay claim to the president's sweet tooth. Subsequently they proclaimed that Reagan's name should never be lent for commercial purposes. (TNR recently received a letter from the White House counsel's office firmly requesting the magazine to discontinue a TV ad that featured Ronald Reagan "in such a manner as to convey commercial sponsorship." The ad was the *National Review*'s, not TNR's.) Nor would Ronald Reagan support charitable fund-raising appeals, however worthy, unless they were for the sorts of non-political organizations that presidents have historically endorsed, such as the Boy Scouts or the 4-H Clubs.

But these rules were left open to misinterpretation when the president invested several White House offices with the authority to prepare letters for his mechanical endorsement. One was the Public Liaison Office, which maintains contact with special interest groups. The office that produced the largest volume of draft presidential letters is the appropriately named Correspondence Section. In the Reagan administration this office has been a haven for right-wing activists, and not infrequently it sent forward draft letters from the president promoting their favorite causes. Most notable among these, according to former White House officials, were the "right to life" movement and the Nicaraguan *contras*.

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The former head of one conservative groupuscule says that if you needed a Reagan letter or picture to put in a conservative newsletter, you had only to ring a White House contact. The offices of the White House counsel and chief of staff were supposed to review letters drawn up by the Correspondence Section before the autopen gave its endorsement. Sometimes senior officials balked. One of the most notorious cases involved a relatively innocuous presidential letter, signed by the autopen and dispatched to an anti-abortion group. The right-to-lifers incorporated the Reagan letter in a fund-raising circular, festooning it with pictures of aborted fetuses.

The White House counsel's office has received numerous complaints about alleged abuses of the president's signature. "Issues like that were the nuts and bolts work of the White House counsel's office," said a lawyer who recently left a top job there. "People would get a letter for one purpose and take it out of context. There were so many cases like this they all merge together in my mind."

THE USE OF presidential documents, souvenirs, or public appearances for political purposes is, of course, hardly new. In the Carter administration, supporters of favored liberal causes such as the Equal Rights Amendment were feted at the White House and reportedly thanked later with polite presidential letters. But there seems to be little evidence that the president's name was ever misappropriated to the extent that it has been under Reagan.

In fact, the autopen put the seal on one of the most bizarre political alliances to surface during the Reagan era. This is the relationship between the White House and the fund-raising apparatus headed by Carl "Spitz" Channell. Channell, a former West Virginia motel operator, served a four-year apprenticeship at NCPAC panhandling rich reactionaries. He left NCPAC in 1983 to open his own fund-raising operation. From modest premises in D.C.'s unfashionable Northeast, he went to work on behalf of groups like the Star Wars lobby, but also created his own stable of anti-communist committees, including the American Conservative Trust and the National Endowment for the Preservation of Liberty.

According to Channell's associates, he and his organizations labored in obscurity until April 15, 1985, when the Nicaraguan *contras* suffered a public relations disaster. Congress had cut off military aide to the Nicaraguan rebels, and their American backers, heeding President Reagan's calls for private support, organized a gala Washington dinner. But few people bought tickets, and the event was a colossal flop. Instead of providing the *contras* with a large nest egg, the fund-raiser collected $80,000 worth of unpaid bills. It is unclear whether Channell was asked or volunteered to clean up the financial debris. But the bills were quickly paid, the *contra* support movement was solvent again, and Channell was on his way to fund-raising superstardom.

Channell found that the *contra* cause was a winner if you chose the right donors. He and his top lieutenants called his technique "high-dollar fund-raising." This meant finding a few wealthy Joe Coors-type conservatives rather than trying to wring a few bucks out of hundreds of ordinary Joes. Channell's personal specialty was wooing rich widows such as Ellen Garwood, a Texas dowager, and Barbara Newington of Connecticut.

THE INITIAL emergency campaign proved so successful that Channell decided to become more heavily involved in the *contra* cause. He began raising money for television advertisements attacking members of Congress who had voted against aid to the rebels. Conservative activists in the White House Public Liaison Office began to invite him to briefings on Nicaragua. One of the regular "briefers" was Oliver North of the National Security Council. An admirer of Channell's fund-raising efforts, North arranged for some of Channell's more generous contributors to meet him for "special briefings." Sometimes these briefings were so special that only one or two donors attended.

By the fall of 1985 Channell was advertising Ronald Reagan as his patron. This was possible because he had proof that the president backed his fund-raising efforts. On October 10 the president sent "Mr. Channell" a letter thanking him for financing a campaign of pro-*contra* TV ads. In December Reagan sent him three more expressions of gratitude, two on the same day. By February 21 the president was on first-name terms with "Spitz," warmly thanking him for his "efforts to educate the American public on the true nature of the Communist regime in Nicaragua."

A White House official who used to handle presidential correspondence took one look at these letters and concluded they were the product of the Reagan autopen. Jared Cameron, Channell's spokesman, said: "I don't know how the president signed the letter. It would be improper for anyone to speculate how the president signed his letters." According to a former Channell employee, office scuttlebutt was that Channell wrote the letters and gave them to a White House contact to have them typed and signed. However Channell obtained the letters, his use of his purported presidential connection became increasingly bold. By last winter his fund-raisers were instructed to use the following pitch: The president wants to invite you to a private White House briefing on the *contras*. But first it would be ever so helpful if you would donate a small sum—at least $30,000—to Spitz Channell's *contra* fund-raising organization.

By late last year Channell was using Ronald Reagan's name (and signature) to raise funds for projects other than the *contras*. According to two former associates, in late 1986 Channell began to make trips to Europe to raise money for Western Goals, a crackpot group founded by the late Representative Larry McDonald that Spitz took over last summer. The pigeons this time were wealthy German widows and deposed Continental royalty. The causes were an eternal flame at the Berlin Wall (apparently to be called the

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"Peace Torch") and a U.S. television advertising campaign in which Europeans would thank America for its democratic values. Channell presented each of his contacts with an autographed picture of Reagan, which was already inscribed with a personal message from the president. At least one potential German donor was not fooled, according to a right-wing activist who talked to him later: "He told Spitz, 'I hope you don't expect me to fall for such a line.' He died laughing." But Channell apparently found the pickings in Europe sufficiently fruitful to make further trips there earlier this year.

Congressional and criminal investigators are now closely examining Channell's operations, including his fund-raising methods and his financing. There are allegations (which Channell has denied) that his organizations were raising money for *contra* weapons shipments, and that the *contras* did not receive all of the money. In one of the strangest stories yet to surface in Iranamok, National Public Radio also reported that Channell and his principal deputy, Daniel Lynn Conrad, are homosexuals, and that Channell's groups had paid large fees to both Channell's long-time roommate and a West Coast consulting firm run by Conrad's friend Kenneth Gilman. Many of Channell's erstwhile admirers on the far right were not pleased.

Channell's spokesman says that all the money raised was properly spent, and adds that "their lifestyles are nobody else's business but their own." He did admit that Channell didn't really know the president at all. He was introduced to the president in private once for a photo opportunity, and thereafter encountered him only at one or two "walk-through" White House briefings. But the spokesman insisted that if Channell wasn't close to the president, at least "he was buddy-buddy with the president's policies." Which apparently gave him considerable license to raise money on the president's behalf. Somebody at the White House ought to take a good look at what the president's loyal minions did with his name, as well as in it.

MARK HOSENBALL

Mark Hosenball is a Washington-based reporter for the London *Sunday Times*.

What happens when the first generation of mass affluence passes on?

THE PATRIMONY SOCIETY

BY ROBERT KUTTNER

THE TAG LINE of the 1950 movie *The Jackie Robinson Story* declared that America is a land "where every child has the opportunity to become president or play baseball for the Brooklyn Dodgers." This boast, alas, is inaccurate. Nobody can grow up to play ball for the Brooklyn Dodgers anymore, and we have yet to elect the first black (or female or Jewish) president. But it reflects our favorite national myth: that America is a land where a poor boy or girl can make it.

The myth has substantial reality. In the 19th century, when the main form of wealth was land, cheap or free farmland was generally available from the government for homesteaders. In the 20th century, except for the Great Depression, increasing educational opportunities, relatively cheap housing, and a booming economy propelled tens of millions of people from humble origins into the great American middle class. And today there are still plenty of Horatio Alger stories in the making. But there is also evidence that the long American trend toward greater equality of opportunity has reversed itself, that class lines have begun to harden, and that "life chances" have more to do with one's family of origin than was the case, say, a generation ago.

This surprising development is the ironic sequel to America's 30-year, postwar economic success. Many have observed that a generational class divide has emerged in America. The older generation now approaching or in retirement is better off financially, on average, than those who are starting or in the middle of their careers. But two obvious factors need to be added to the familiar equation: these prosperous oldsters don't live forever, and most of them have children. For the first time, possibly, in human history, a large percentage of people will inherit substantial financial benefits from their parents. But a larger percentage still will not. This second group is left out of what we might call the "patrimony society."

The two leading indicators of the patrimony society are the two great badges of membership in the middle class: housing and college education. In the 1940s and '50s, one person earning a median wage could afford to buy a median-priced house. But housing prices, as many of us have painfully observed, have been outstripping income for more than a decade. As the economists Frank Levy and Richard Michel have calculated, in 1949 it took just 14 percent of an average 30-year-old man's paycheck to make the payments on an average house. By 1985 the figure was 44 percent. The homeownership rate, after steadily rising for

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three decades, actually began dropping in the early 1980s, and the drop has been sharpest among young families.

The great divide is between those who bought their first home before the great housing inflation and those who bought one afterward. The first group enjoys low-interest mortgages, effortless equity buildup, and cheap housing costs. The latter entrants have staggering monthly payments, if they can afford a house at all.

However, one large group of young people can still readily afford their first house: those who are helped by their parents. The people who collected a real estate windfall in the 1960s and '70s have a huge amount of wealth stashed in their homes today. And increasingly those people, now in their 50s and 60s, are using some of that unexpected wealth to help their own children to become homeowners. This form of socialism-in-one-family, needless to say, is fine for younger families whose parents own real estate. But the people whose parents did not own homes are doubly set back. They are less likely to have the cushion of family wealth to help overcome the high barriers to their own homeownership in the 1980s; and as rental costs keep rising relative to income, their own parents may instead become dependent on them.

In this respect, the "generational" perspective on social class in the 1980s is only half right. It is true, as a gross generalization, that the generation now approaching retirement got a much better economic deal than the baby boom generation. They bought houses cheap and cashed them in dear. They started out when expectations were low, and enjoyed 30 years of rising real incomes. They paid far less into Social Security, compared with what they're getting out, than the ratio future retirees will enjoy. But since wealth transfers between generations occur mainly within families, the children of the economic haves are far better able to compensate for the generational rip-off than the children of have-nots. In this respect, the ticket of entry to a "starter house" has become less a matter of self-reliance, and more a matter of patrimony.

THERE ARE NO reliable data on the degree to which family help has become an increasing factor in homeownership. Statistics exist, but they are based on surveys, or on information volunteered by homebuyers on mortgage applications. According to the Chicago Title Insurance Company, the percentage of first-time homebuyers who report getting financial help from relatives jumped from 8.7 percent in 1978 to over 30 percent in 1979 and 1980, and has settled back to below 20 percent as mortgage rates have declined. But these statistics are notoriously unreliable. That question on the mortgage application form—"Is any part of the down payment borrowed?"—must rank up there with the job application question "Have you ever seen a psychiatrist?" as one of the most common invitations for lying in modern life.

Fewer young families today are buying homes. Homeownership generally among 30- to 35-year-olds has declined from 59.3 percent in 1981 to 54.7 percent in 1985. Homeownership among under-30-year-olds with children showed the sharpest decline of all—from 38 percent in 1980 to just 30 percent in 1985, while homeownership among the over-65 set actually increased slightly. Among all married couples without children, the homeownership rate has held steady at about 79 percent, though younger couples are delaying buying their first home. Not surprisingly, too, the decline has been most dramatic among families with relatively low earnings. Young people without family wealth behind them have the hardest time getting on the ladder in the first place.

THE OTHER GREAT ticket to the middle class is college education. Education costs lately have also outstripped family income, just at a time when federal aid has been declining. This affects who gets into college, who stays to graduate, and what sorts of burdens are carried over into household budgets afterward. Kenneth C. Green, associate director of the UCLA Higher Education Research Institute, keeps track of social class and college enrollment and observes, "As tuition costs have outstripped family income, we're seeing a great deal of 'buying down.' Students who would have gone to private institutions are going to public ones. Students who would have gone full time are going part time. Students who would have gone to four-year college are going to two-year college. And more students from poor homes go to vocational schools instead of colleges." Again, of course, the great exception to this picture is the student from an affluent family, whose parents pick up the tab. This was always the case, but a generation ago the tab was far smaller. A partial scholarship and a summer job could pay most of the costs of college. Lately the financial ability to attend a good university without financial stress has also become a kind of patrimony.

As recently as 1980 the cost of attending four years of private university averaged about $34,000, or 118 percent of the median family income, down slightly from the comparable ratio of tuition to income in 1970 or in 1960. In just five years, that cost has increased to over $45,000, or 157 percent of the current median family income, according to a study by the College Boards. During the same period, federal scholarship aid has fallen (by about 20 percent), and the dominant form of federal aid has shifted from grants to loans. In 1965, when the federal government first started spending serious money for higher education aid, the general scheme envisioned grants for students from poor families, and lightly subsidized loans for the middle class. In the academic year 1975-76, grants targeted to needy students accounted for 80 percent of all federal education aid; loans made up 17 percent (the remainder was work-study money). But by 1985-86 the federal government was actually spending more on loans than on grants. Since 1974, when the current grant program began, the average grant amount has increased less than 20 percent, while the costs of attending college have trebled. In the face of rising costs, students from poorer families have been compelled to turn to loans and jobs to supplement the meager pool of grant money, and some students from poor families have been dissuaded from attending college alto-

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gether. Although the loan program was originally conceived as a middle-class program, by 1983, 40 percent of borrowers under the guaranteed student loan program were from families with incomes of $15,000 or less.

Education Secretary William Bennett and other conservative critics of federal higher education subsidies have argued that the aid has been responsible for the rising tuition, supposedly by making it possible for colleges to charge more money. But this claim is dubious in two respects. First, the timing is wrong. Federal aid began rising steeply in the early 1970s, but not until the 1980s did tuition begin rising faster than family incomes. Second, there is persuasive evidence that the *decline* in aid helped cause the recent tuition hikes. This occurred because most colleges have a commitment to accept qualified students regardless of their families' ability to pay. But with federal aid declining, colleges have been forced to raise tuition to fund their internal financial aid budgets.

The changing economics of higher education seems to disadvantage students from poorer families in several distinct respects. One problem is that only a fraction of the approximately 1,700 private colleges and universities are able to offer needy students a full four-year financial aid package. Many colleges, to recruit minority students, have begun "front-loading" financial aid. Admissions counselors call the ploy "bait-and-switch." A full scholarship may be offered for freshman year, but in sophomore or junior year the student hits a financial wall where loans and part-time employment must make up the difference. This financial pressure is implicated in the much higher dropout rates among students from non-affluent families. According to the Department of Education, three percent of students from families with incomes over $38,000 drop out in their first year of college, but 15 percent of students from low-income families drop out. In 1980, 40 percent of freshmen came from families with incomes under $20,000. In 1986, only 23 percent did. Correcting for inflation, the share of students from moderate-income families enrolled in college has dropped by about one-fourth. Since peaking in the late 1970s, black enrollment in both two-year and four-year colleges has declined about ten percent.

IN GENERAL, students from poor and minority families seem more reluctant than middle-class students to borrow large sums of money. (In the case of the middle-class family, mother and father may help pay off the loan, using that windfall equity from the appreciated family house.) This shift in the economics of education has had the further effect of tracking less affluent students into vocational and trade schools. Since the early 1970s, the government has made available Basic Educational Opportunity Grants ("Pell Grants") to needy students. The typical Pell Grant averages about $1,100 a year, and the statutory annual maximum is $2,600. Current policy permits the grant to be used to finance either college or a vocational or trade school. Although the grants pay only a fraction of the costs of college, they pay 100 percent of the costs of schools of cosmetology, or air conditioner repair, or more dubious trade schools of the sort that advertise on matchbook covers.

Many students from less affluent families are apparently attracted by the fact that the federal grant picks up all of the tuition costs of a trade school. While college enrollments have flattened out, enrollments in "proprietary" (i.e., profit-making) short-term trade schools have soared lately. Ironically, these private, "entrepreneurial" schools, often located in storefronts, are thriving today—on federal money. The proprietary schools aggressively market their program to poor and minority students as a full tuition alternative to college. The number of such institutions qualified for federal aid has more than doubled in a decade, and Secretary Bennett would be right to attribute that growth to the federal funding. Although many of these institutions are well-established, decent trade schools, some of which even refund tuition if the graduate fails to get a job, others are shoddy diploma mills. As a group, the proprietary schools are responsible for a disproportionate share of bad "college" loan debts.

ACCORDING TO the College Scholarship Service, the average student borrower at a four-year private college begins a career about $9,000 in debt, though close to a third roll up total debts exceeding $10,000. In the case of postgraduate degree holders, the average debt is some $30,000. A debt of $10,000 produces monthly payments of about $100 a month. Though this is hardly crushing, it is one more burden that separates the non-affluent student from the affluent one, for the statistics show that very few students from well-to-do families rely on college loans. (Only three-tenths of one percent of students from families with incomes of $75,000 and over use student loans.)

One trend that is very clear is the increasing importance of college education in determining income. There was a period during the heyday of high-wage blue-collar employment when someone without a college degree could earn a good middle-class paycheck. Indeed, there was a time when many economists warned that too many people were getting unnecessary college degrees, which would not pay off economically. But that is no longer the case. Since the early 1970s the average wage has declined, but the decline has been much more dramatic among people without college degrees. According to data compiled by economists Levy and Michel, comparing real wages for 25- to 34-year-old men in 1973 and 1984, men who had one to three years of college suffered a real decline of 41 percent in their median wage over that 11-year period. For high school graduates, the decline was 24 percent. For college graduates, the decline was only nine percent.

College education is still broadly available to children from non-affluent families. Public universities still exist; it is still possible to incur debts, work part-time, and graduate with honors. But as an economist might put it, at the margin the entry barriers for the non-rich have become somewhat higher. It's true that there was no past "golden age" of mass higher education that corresponded to the golden age of cheap housing. The era of expanded housing opportunity and low interest rate mortgages began right

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after World War II, and lasted for 35 years. The big growth of college enrollments came later. As late as 1960, only about 38 percent of 18-year-old high school graduates were in college, compared to almost 60 percent in 1985. The big push for equal educational opportunity began in 1965, and lasted only a little more than a decade. Although it has become harder to pay for college, the fact remains that the United States has a far higher fraction of its population graduating from college than most industrial nations. In Europe, higher education is generally free, but available to far fewer people.

At some universities, the patrimonial aspect of housing and education is summed up by a new undergraduate institution, the student condo. Many urban campuses are experiencing severe shortages of dormitory space. Some affluent parents neatly solve the problem by buying their child a small condo. This solves the housing problem for his years at school, produces a tax shelter for them, and gets junior on the homeownership ladder a few years ahead of schedule. At Boston University, where some 4,000 undergrads live off-campus, numerous students live in parent-provided condos. There is nothing sinful about this, of course. It's only problematic if you don't have a prosperous parent.

In the past, patrimony mattered most intensely for the upper class, which bequeathed large estates to heirs, and provided its children with elite private schools and universities and then with entrée to the right law firms, the right clubs, the right investment banks. If there is a difference today, it is that patrimony matters increasingly for the middle class as well.

ULTIMATELY, there are two ways of viewing this growing gap between those with and without patrimonies. The first looks primarily at the generational inequalities; the second looks at the inequalities within generations. The first observes the broad statistical fact that old people, on undifferentiated average, now have substantially more wealth than young people. Recent research by economists Daphne Greenwood of the University of Colorado and Edward Wolff of New York University finds that in 1962 households headed by 60- to 64-year-olds had a mean household wealth equal to 1.6 times that of all households; by 1983 that had risen to 2.3 times the overall mean. But of course the fact remains that a great many older families do not have substantial wealth. Thirteen percent live in poverty, and among people over age 65, the bottom 40 percent of the income distribution have only 2.8 percent of the wealth—less than the counterpart group had in 1962, and less than the equivalent group of working-age people.

For remedies, the first view looks primarily at imperfections or excesses of the welfare state. This school of reform wants to cut Social Security and Medicare benefits, or means-test them, so that young people, on average, will bear lower payroll taxes to support their elders. But this remedy misunderstands the overall problem, and attacks the limited means that do exist for reducing inequality within both generations.

The second view, to which I subscribe, observes that although some wealthy older people indeed have too sweet a subsidized deal, many older people are not rich. By the same token, although it is harder for young people without family resources to get on the ladder nowadays, young people with substantial family wealth behind them are disadvantaged not at all by the new economics of higher education and homeownership, except insofar as they must rely on their parents for a head start.

THUS, though it is tempting to look at income inequality solely as a generational problem, in reality it is both a generational and a class problem. There may be some excesses in Social Security, but the main culprit in the patrimony society is the private economy, not the public one. We need to do three things, in my view: limit entitlements to those who need them, but without wrecking the cohesion of universal programs such as Social Security and Medicare. We should fully tax Social Security benefits—but with a generous exemption for moderate-income pensioners. Second, we should increase opportunity outlays for younger people without family wealth: more tuition support, and special help for first-time home-ownership in families with limited assets. Third—and this is the part entirely overlooked by the "generational equity" people—it is time to get serious about taxing large inherited wealth.

The real generational rip-off comes from the fact that it remains very easy for very wealthy people to shelter the vast bulk of the wealth that they pass along to their heirs in the next generation, while young people who don't come from such families go without. Despite the 1986 tax reform, passing along family wealth remains easy enough. There is no form of taxation less harmful to incentive than the taxation of inherited wealth, which is pure windfall to the heirs. Today the effective tax rate on large estates is a few percentage points. In a society where wealthy people enjoy substantial political power, no form of tax is easier to justify in principle and harder to legislate in practice than a tax on inherited wealth. In 1976 Congress briefly voted to tax heirs for the capital gains on stock they inherited, but rescinded the reform before it could take effect. There is no purer windfall than inheriting appreciated stock. The parent died without ever paying taxes on the profit, and the child inherits without owing any tax. Closing that loophole alone would save the Treasury $12 billion a year by taxing the patrimones who can most afford it. We might also reform Medicaid so that people with substantial private wealth cannot turn it over to their families and then check into nursing homes at public expense.

The biggest imperative of generational equity today is not the denial of pensions and medical benefits to middle-class retired people in order to lower taxes of younger people generally. Rather, it is the restoration of some measure of economic opportunity to those without family wealth. America has indeed been a land where people from humble origins can find economic success. If it becomes instead a land of patrimony, where the social class of the parents dictates the economic prospects of the children, it will cease to have any special moral claim. □

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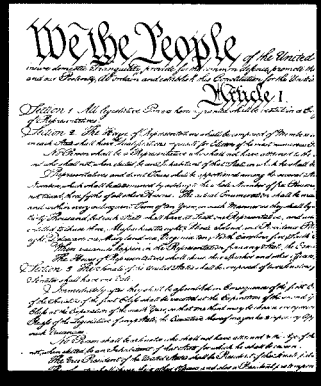
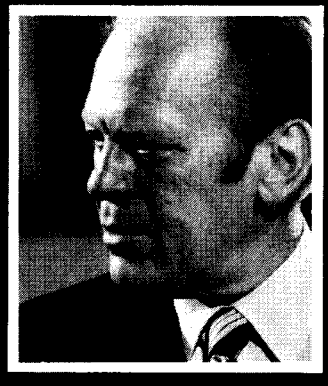
THE PRESIDENCY AND THE CONSTITUTION





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STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Successes

Insofar as Herbert Ross's new film can be said to have values, they're mostly dreadful, but they're no worse than those of our society, which is a lot less amusing than his film. *The Secret of My Success* is about a Kansas college grad who goes to New York to make it big and who makes it bigger than he could have fantasized. It's a classic gambit, the country youth going to the metropolis to seek his fortune, but the film soon announces that it's a send-up of both Flaubert and Horatio Alger. Michael J. Fox is a distant nephew of the head of a gigantic conglomerate, Richard Jordan, who grants him a job as a mailroom clerk. Fox, ambitious and trained for business, devours memos and reports, finds an empty exec office, usurps it, and poses as an exec, telephoning decisions in between his rounds with his mail cart. This entails numerous quick changes from clerk's outfit to suit and numerous nicely unbelievable coincidences. Climbing the ladder is altered to working the elevator—as a dressing room.

The Secret of My Success
(Universal)
A Life in Movies
by Michael Powell
(Knopf, 705 pp., $24.95)

Sex is not overlooked. Fox has spotted a stunner, Helen Slater, who is the huge company's one female exec amid a chorus of yea-saying male execs. Fox pursues Slater in his suit. In his prole outfit he is ordered to chauffeur his uncle's wife, Margaret Whitton, to her Connecticut home, where she pursues *him*. His uncle is pursuing Slater. This leads to a spicy quadrille, especially when Fox and Slater are invited to a company weekend at the Connecticut mansion.

When a film farce-comedy announces early that it has nothing to do with realism, the only question (as with *Outrageous Fortune*) is: Do we get something worthwhile instead? The answer here (as with *Outrageous Fortune*) is: almost too much. Fox's frenzied quests, in money and love, are played out against a proposed takeover of the mammoth company, with a finish that's as much of a pleasant pastry as what went before. The pastry is slathered with more Reddi-wip than whipped cream, but it's frothy enough. The script is by Jim Cash and Jack Epps Jr., aided by A. J. Carothers, who wrote the original story. The first two wrote *Legal Eagles* and *Top Gun*, and all three have come up with the right praline dialogue.

Ross directed with a good sense of actors' rhythms. Carlo di Palma, lately Woody Allen's cinematographer, does well by everybody and everything, especially the Manhattan panoramas. Fox has the face that a computer might arrive at if it were fed the dreams of high school girldom, but he also has chipmunk alacrity. All the others do what they're told, adequately. The hidden hero of the occasion is the editor, Paul Hirsch, who intercuts those imperial Manhattan shots as statements of what Fox is driving at and who handles the slapstick chases—there are many—with perfect timing. The film owes Hirsch a lot. It owes less to its score, another one of those medleys of loud rock numbers that have nothing to do with what we see but are supposed to guarantee that, though the formulae are stock, the picture is mod.

What is more rare than a well-written, rich-textured film biography? In the world of books, not much. *A Life in Movies*, the autobiography of the English director Michael Powell, fills the bill to overflowing—a word that comes easily to mind because it's 705 pages, is only Volume One, and stops in 1948! Powell is now 81 and took six years to write this volume; typically clear-eyed, he decided to play safe by publishing this (huge) portion now. We can all hope to read the second volume if, as he says, "I am spared." Meanwhile, thanks for what we have.

Powell was the director or co-director, co-writer, co-producer—most notably with the Hungarian émigré Emeric Pressburger—of more than 50 films. Probably the best known in the United States are *Peeping Tom*, *The Red Shoes*, *Stairway to Heaven*, *I Know Where I'm Going*, *The Invaders*, *One of Our Aircraft Is Missing*, and *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*. Powell has loved filmmaking, with all its knocks and disappointments, and has very much to say about it that is fascinating as history and insight. He has loved women, including one of his two wives, and is almost as fascinating about them. He has loved a great deal that he has seen and done outside films. His variety of loves warms the whole book and makes us overlook the excesses (some episodes go on a touch too long) and the minor lapses. (For instance, he gives the wrong first name to the renowned cinematographer Eugen Schüfftan.)

He loved his boyhood and youth as much as he loved anything that followed. He gives the first 115 pages to his 20 years before films, up to 1925, and these are the most consistently well-written pages in the book. He grew

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Hollywood Shuffle. Satire about a young black actor's attempt to break into pictures. Some very funny sketches along the way. Co-written and directed by the leading man, Robert Townsend. (Reviewed 5/4/87)

Outrageous Fortune. Improbable spy chase, improbably well performed by Shelley Long (nifty) and Bette Midler (nutty). With smart backchat. (3/2/87)

Prick Up Your Ears. Distinguished writing, directing, acting in this investigation of Joe Orton's life—and of the research for his biography by John Lahr. Memorable. (4/20/87)

Swimming to Cambodia. Jonathan Demme found ingenious simplicities with which to film Spalding Gray's one-man show—about Gray's small role in *The Killing Fields* and what he saw and learned from it. (3/23/87)

SK

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up on a farm near Canterbury—his father was a gentleman farmer—and he still thinks of himself as a Man of Kent. His portraits of his parents and relatives and friends, his evocation of life in the English countryside before the First World War are splendid—something like Siegfried Sassoon's *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man*. Here is Powell as a boy accompanying his father to the local flour mill:

> The racket in the flour mill was immense when the wheel was turning and the corn was being ground. The whole structure shook with delight, like a horse on a frosty morning. The air was dusty with flour. The wooden chutes and trap doors, down which the corn and the flour slid, banged and rattled like trap doors in a pantomime chase. The leather belts, which connected wheel to flying wheel, slapped and whirred. . . . The miller would open wonderful little doors for me to see the grain, or the flour, falling to its destiny.

Writing at this pitch is not common in autobiographies of any kind. In film books it's so rare that I want especially to underscore it lest, by its very title (accurate though it is), this be accounted one more jerry-built filmer's chronicle.

Powell *père*, an errant, sporty type, chose not to return home after the First World War; left wife and brood; eventually took over a hotel on the Riviera. This was the making of his son's life. On a visit to his father, Powell, who had been working as a bank clerk, confessed his love of films, and Powell senior introduced him to members of an American film crew, headed by Rex Ingram, that was shooting nearby. Powell got a job as assistant to the stills photographer and just kept going from there—not smoothly but persistently.

Doubt that Powell remembers long-ago conversations word for word: he remembers the gist, and his dialogue may be an improvement over what was actually said. (That's what screenwriters are for.) Note that he lamented, still somewhat laments, the advent of sound, even though his own directing career was entirely during the sound era. Note that he says, "I don't intend to go into great detail about the content of the films I worked on during the war years," then goes into great detail about the content while recounting how the films were made. Note that, incredibly, this book about a picture-maker includes no photographs. Still, the book is chock-full of interest, is

Not just the facts.

Making NEWS

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DOUBLEDAY

"The secret is out."*

The literary world is still agog and gossiping about the excerpts from THE BELLES LETTRES PAPERS that ran in *The Nation* and *The New Republic*. Now comes the nervously (by some), eagerly (by others) awaited full story of that esteemed book review journal, *Belles Lettres*, wickedly confirming that "no one is sacred. . . Charles Simmons writes with great economy and wit—the names of his characters alone are a pleasure. . . this is a publishing insider's delight."—**Publishers Weekly*

"A good fiction-writer making it look awfully easy."
—*Kirkus Reviews*

The Belles Lettres Papers

A NOVEL
BY THE AUTHOR OF *WRINKLES*
CHARLES SIMMONS

William Morrow

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studded with firsthand observations on the film world—and the world outside it. This, for instance, on wartime London: "Many people had been evacuated and the population was down to about two million. It had become really a charming city except for a few bombs." The line is jarring in a welcome way. Like the rest of this book, it comes from someone who has his own eyes, was there, is unafraid to say what he saw and thought, and can say it well.

THE ENIGMA OF DEPARTURE

An Unfinished Journey by Shiva Naipaul

(Viking, 136 pp., $15.95)

In the summer of 1964 a young man of 19 sailed from his native Port-of-Spain for England. The scene is set in Shiva Naipaul's first novel, *Fireflies*:

> Mr. and Mrs. Khoja were at the docks to see him off. Mrs. Lutchman wept profusely when the ship slipped its moorings.
>
> "What you crying for?" Mr. Khoja said. "Just think, he going to come back a doctor. Dr. B. Lutchman. What you always wanted him to be. You should be laughing, not crying."
>
> "I know," she replied. "But all the same, you know, when you spend years bringing up a child, is not an easy thing for a mother to see him leave she. He going to come back a man."

Naipaul did not go back, except for short trips to see his family. Even then, as he said, he always revisited Trinidad with a sense of apprehension that "having arrived here, I may never be able to get out again."

His journey had in fact begun earlier, and explains why a writer called Shivadhar Srinavasa Naipaul came from the West Indies. It is the story of what he called "the desperate litany of place bred by our Indian diaspora," the internal emigration within the British Empire that took Indians to South Africa, Malaya, Kenya, and—as indentured laborers to work on the sugar plantations in the late 19th century—to Trinidad, the most ethnically heterogeneous place in the West Indies.

Shiva was the sixth of seven children of Seepersad and Droapatie Naipaul. There were two sons, the elder of whom by 12 years was V. S. Naipaul. After school in Port-of-Spain, Shiva followed in his brother Vidia's footsteps by winning an Island Scholarship to Oxford. Like his brother he became a writer; like him he won the respected John Llewellyn Rhys prize for his first novel; like him he married an Englishwoman and settled in England. There were inevitable complications in this fraternal relationship, but there was no rivalry. Vidia consoled Shiva on his setbacks and congratulated him on his successes; and his new novel, *The Enigma of Arrival*, is dedicated to Shiva's memory.

At University College, Shiva read philosophy and psychology, then switched on a whim to classical Chinese, in which he took a bad degree. At Oxford he met Jenny Stuart, whom he married in 1967, and he began a novel. As he later wrote in his essay "My Brother and I," included in this posthumous collection, he was staring at a sheet of Chinese characters "which danced meaninglessly across the frail paper . . . when, for no reason I can fathom, a sentence came into my head. 'The Lutchmans lived in a part of the city where the houses, tall and narrow . . .' I pushed away the books and papers in front of me, wrote down the sentence and started to follow it."

This sentence became the opening of chapter two of *Fireflies*, which was published in 1970, when Naipaul was 25. The novel won three prizes, was showered with praise, and deserved everything that was said of it. It is the story of the Khojas, "the acknowledged leaders of the Hindu community in Trinidad"; of Baby, an unimportant cousin of the family; of her marriage to the hopeless Ram Lutchman; of their sons; of Ram's death; and of the boys' failures—Bhaskar goes to India to study medicine but breaks down and comes home defeated; Romesh goes to the bad, to prison, and to New York, where he marries a Puerto Rican, "a little colored girl." Naipaul's novel is a dazzling portrait of a society, but it is also a story of struggle and loss, told with Turgenevian feeling, control, and delicacy.

Its appeal lies partly in Naipaul's faultless ear for dialogue, his exact recollection of the speech of his boyhood: "But what you think a daughter-in-law make for?"; "What you does here in Trinidad?"; "Huh! You hear the latest one, Govind? Rheumatism and diabetes too low-class for she. She says is she eyes giving she trouble." Which is to say, too, that *Fireflies* is extremely funny and acutely observant. Indeed, uncomfortably so. This is Hindu Port-of-Spain, where a well-to-do family has a servant called "Blackie," whose grandfather was a slave and who never leaves the house from one end of the year to the other; where "if any member of the clan had gone so far as to contemplate marriage with a Muslim, the ensuing scandal would have been no less than if he had wished to marry a Negro"; where one girl does indeed finally lose caste: "Just imagine Renouka going about the place with that nigger." All this is written on more than one level of irony. There was—still is—racial politics in Trinidad. But Naipaul only encountered racial prejudice when he came to London, looked for someplace to live, and saw ads in shop windows that read "Kolored Pipple Need Not Apply." He was disconcerted to realize that this referred to him.

All the same, London was where he made his home. In 1973 Naipaul's second novel, *The Chip-Chip Gatherers,* was published. Also set in Trinidad, it is another brilliant performance, as funny as *Fireflies* and as sad, or even sadder. Its hero, Egbert Ramsaran, has done well at the Ramsaran Transport Company. He has moved away, and upward, from the situation of his birth, but he is held to it by all sorts of personal and emotional ties. The Settlement where he was born is the poorest and most insignificant place on the island, from which anyone would want to escape. The novel's final pages explain its title:

> The heat built up inexorably throughout the morning and the sea changed its texture, acquiring a thicker, more oily sheen. . . . It was at this time, when the tide was out, that the beds of chip-chips were exposed and squadrons of women and children from the village would come down to the beach. . . . Squatting on their haunches, they labored long and assiduously, shoveling and raking over the wet

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sand with their hands; filling the buckets and basins with the pink and yellow shells which were the size and shape of a long fingernail. Inside each was the sought-after prize: a miniscule kernel of insipid flesh. A full bucket of shells would provide them with a mouthful.

APART FROM reviews and prizes, these two books won Shiva Naipaul an enthusiastic following among those who still cared for fiction. The enthusiasts were disconcerted that no novel followed for another ten years, which is all the more lamentable in the light of Naipaul's early death. Some reasons for the hiatus are more obvious than others. Naipaul did not want to be typecast, least of all as a "comic novelist." After all, he could not go on writing about Trinidad forever from exile. He wanted to re-examine style as well as subject, and he worked intermittently on a novel for those ten years. But he had to earn a living, too; writing even prize-winning novels will not support a family.

He also had other purposes in mind. "All travel is a form of self-extinction," he writes in *An Unfinished Journey*; but travel was for him a form of self-exploration and self-discovery as well. In the 1970s he began to travel widely. He wrote for a number of papers and magazines, including THE NEW REPUBLIC, but he had a special connection with the London weekly *Spectator*. He was a friend of several of us who wrote for it, and Jenny worked for Alexander Chancellor, who edited the *Spectator* from 1975 to 1984 and to whom Naipaul's *Beyond the Dragon's Mouth*, a collection of short stories and articles that appeared in 1984, is dedicated.

Naipaul's travels took him to Bombay and Bihar, Italy and Iran, Morocco, Surinam and the Seychelles. His last journey was to Australia, for a book he was writing when he died. In this collection there are essays on Australia that hint at what might have been. There were two other full-length books, products of publishers' commissions. In *North of South* (1978), Naipaul tells of his travels over some months through Kenya, Tanzania, and Zambia, all former British colonies that lie north of "South"—that is, of South Africa. It is a somber book, enlivened by dark humor and acute observation.

With its appearance Naipaul's reputation seemed to change. Gently mocking fiction about his own people in Indian Trinidad was one thing; but here he was

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looking sourly at independent Africa, from the ghastly encounter with a shoeshine boy in Nairobi (who demands a ridiculous fee and threatens violence when the right sum is offered) to the tragic absurdity of President Nyerere's *ujamaa*—the socialist road—in Tanzania. Naipaul's judgments were deemed "insulting to Africa." Just as much to the point, they were insulting to fashionable opinion. He had touched the rawest of nerves.

THERE IS no use avoiding the question of race, though even Naipaul's critics skirted it. He was not "white," as we absurdly call Europeans. He may not have gone to Africa with hostile prejudices formed; he was not one of those he mentions in *North of South* with an aggressive assertion of Indianness, "the kind of atavism that turns young men into 'pundits' and Negro-haters." But neither did he travel to Africa with any predisposition in its favor. He was acutely alive to the tension between black and brown. That tension is a grim fact of life in Trinidad, where browns call blacks "niggers" and blacks call browns "coolies"; and in South Africa, where black gangs kill Indian shopkeepers; and in Uganda, from which Amin expelled the Asians en masse.

It is perfectly true that no "white" man could have written (or at least been published) as Naipaul did. But then his advantage was precisely that he was a non-European. He was free from the guilt toward the "Third World" that the rest of us suffer. "Things and actions are what they are, and the consequences of them will be what they will be," said Bishop Butler. "Why then should we desire to be deceived?" But many high-minded "whites" have deceived themselves about Africa in the last 25 years. Naipaul was not deceived, though the results of this undeception were awkward.

His book was disliked by the professional Africanists. Worse still, he was said to have become a "cult figure among discerning South Africans," which is to say among less than half-witted whites. That would have disgusted Naipaul, who had no time at all for South Africa—for its white liberals or for its Afrikaners. (He did not even make the effort to understand the Boers through a study of their history; "A bad people with a bad culture," he once said to me.) What he hated with Swiftian indignation was bigotry and cruelty, and above all dishonesty. Africa was a "hopeless, doomed continent! Only lies flourished here. Africa was swaddled in lies—the lies of an aborted European civilization; the lies of liberation. Nothing but lies." Telling the truth was Naipaul's goal and obsession. But as the Yiddish proverb says, "If you tell the truth you get hit on the head," and so Naipaul found.

HIS NEXT BOOK was on a bleaker subject still. In 1979 the appalling news came from "Jonestown" in Guyana that hundreds of the deluded followers of the Californian cult-leader Jim Jones, mostly black Americans, had committed a collective act of suicide, partly of their own volition, partly under duress; they and their children had washed down cyanide with Kool-Aid while Jones ranted at them. Naipaul went to Guyana, then to California, to piece the story together. What he wrote appeared in 1981 as *Black and White* (it was published in the United States under the significantly different title *Journey to Nowhere*).

It is a remarkable book, and not a gentle one. It is not a conventional work of reporting, which was what his publishers had expected. ("They've got a horse of a different color," he said gleefully.) The book deals less with the events in Guyana than with their American background. Having been called anti-African, Naipaul was now called anti-American, and it is not hard to see why. Naipaul wrote without anesthetic about California—which "sucks in America's loose ends. It twists and tangles them in a hundred different ways." He casts a cold eye on Buckminster Fuller and Huey Newton and Mark Lane. Again, someone describes Guyanese politics in terms of the struggle between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks; but "there were no Bolsheviks and Mensheviks in Guyana. There are transported Indians and Africans, locked into poverty, resentment, ignorance and delusion." And everywhere, "The lies fell like steady rain." His anger was not directed at Guyana, or at the pathetic victims of Jonestown. He saved it instead for Jim Jones's radical-chic admirers, who might have known that Jones was a crook and a charlatan before he became a murderer.

When *Black and White* was published in London, Martin Amis wondered admiringly but plaintively when we were going to see another novel from Naipaul. He spoke for many. In 1983, at last, *A Hot Country* appeared (published

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in the United States as *Love and Death in a Hot Country*). The book was a tribute to its author's perfectionism, but it took critics and readers aback. The hot country was no longer Trinidad. Naipaul laid a false trail by calling it "Guyama," though he insisted that it was not meant to be Guyana. His characters, most memorably the high-minded liberal Aubrey St Pierre sitting in his bookshop in a faraway country where nobody buys books, were original and exceptional creations. The style had been pared down to a simple, supple minimum. The point of regard was as somber as ever. Yet *A Hot Country* was underrated. I had the feeling that the Third World lobby was getting its revenge on somebody who had stepped out of line. Naipaul had certainly stepped far. His father-in-law, Douglas Stuart, recounts in his short, touching introduction to *An Unfinished Journey*: "I did suggest to him that after the bleakness of his novel *A Hot Country* he might consider . . . returning to the comic vein. . . . 'How can I?' he said. 'I have walked over the bodies in Jonestown.' "

FOR THOSE who knew him, Shiva could be the most warm and engaging of friends. He was shaggy and bear-like in appearance—stocky and tending to the plump, with a stoop that belied his five-foot-ten frame—and bear-like in manner as well. But it must be said that he could be truculent when he wanted to be, with a rare gift for putting backs up and rubbing people the wrong way. Soon after his 39th birthday, in early 1984, he set off for Australia, to write his book about it. It was a less than happy journey. In Australia he excelled at provocation. In "Flight into Blackness," included in this collection, he tell us that a couple of anthropologists "had taken exception to my remarking over dinner in a Chinese restaurant that the Aborigines could not be considered to have created a culture as sophisticated—say—as the Chinese or Greeks or Indians or Egyptians had done." As a result of that indiscretion, he was banned by the Northern Land Council from the territories under its control. And there was more social awkwardness in Sydney.

In any case, he returned to London, and we saw each other regularly, though I was working long hours at a newspaper. On the evening of August 13, I missed an urgent message on my answering machine. It was not until I came to the office the next morning that I learned that Shiva had died of coronary thrombosis the day before. He had always been afraid of death; in that sense alone it came to him mercifully, in an instant. He died on a Wednesday, and on Friday we saw him cremated, with Hindu rites, in north London—though in much less romantic circumstances than Ram's in *Fireflies*.

The *Times* of London ran an obituary, fatuous even by its standards, which spoke of "unfulfilled promise." That was false as well as stupid. It is truer to say, as Douglas Stuart does in his introduction, that "to dwell upon the waste would be otiose." One's feelings at Shiva's death were a mixture of grief and grievance: there was sorrow at the loss of a friend with whom one had hoped, without thinking about it, to stroll into middle age, irritation at a capricious providence for removing a writer whose future books one had badly wanted, again without thinking about it, to read. But the worst of it was that he was onto something big. He was growing into a great writer, in pursuit of a great subject. We live in a race-mad age, when the obsessions of the anti-racists almost match those of the racists. Of course Naipaul hated every form of racism. But his hatred went hand-in-hand with a burning honesty and with a hatred of humbug—qualities that have not always been the hallmarks of those who have made their names as tribunes of oppressed peoples.

HIS relationship with his own inheritance was complicated. He was affectionate toward the Hindu diaspora, though not so affectionate that he wished to spend much time in its embrace. He was sometimes ill at ease with Trinidad, as Trinidad was sometimes ill at ease with him. (I remember a party at which Shiva met Deryck Murray, the West Indian wicket-keeper, and reminded him that they had been at school together in Port-of-Spain; the response was not effusive.) Naipaul was fascinated by his ancestry; he was anything but a "self-hating Hindu." But he had come to terms with the fact of his own emancipation from his past. He was appalled by the reality of India, though he felt for the Indian masses: "Sometimes we Hindus have to weep." And he was distinctly guarded about Islam; his prejudices did not slacken after a trip to Morocco during Ramadan, when he was given a rough time for smoking in public

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and asking for a glass of whiskey: "It was my misfortune to look as if I ought to have been a Muslim."

In "Flight into Blackness," Naipaul denounces traditional racism. But as he perspicaciously saw, "blackness" is a patronizing and reductionist notion. This is particularly true in the British context. Some of the many immigrants from the empire who have settled here since the war, and their British-born descendants, are of black African origin, by way of slavery and the West Indies. More of them are from what was once the Raj, now India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh: there are Tamils, Gujaratis, Bengalis, Sikhs, and others. The progressive orthodoxy now insists that all these people should be described as "black." This raises an interesting question of definition. Where does blackness end? Are the Persians black? Are the Arabs, or the Turks? Or are the Israelis black? A German nationalist visiting All Souls at Oxford in the 1930s once held forth about Germany's right to colonies, but was silenced by Lewis Namier with the words: "*Wir Juden und die andere Farbigen denken anders*" (We Jews and other colored people think differently). But that was Namierite irony.

IF NAIPAUL was cool to the idea that he was "black," that was not from racism or self-hatred. It was, rather, from a deep abhorrence of generalization, of lumping people together to make a political or ideological point. That comes across clearly in "Flight into Blackness," and even more clearly in "The Illusion of the Third World." The Third World is a convenient cant phrase:

> To blandly subsume, say, Ethiopia, India, and Brazil under the one banner of Third Worldhood is as absurd and as denigrating as the old assertion that all Chinese look alike. People only look alike when you can't be bothered to look at them too closely. . . . Being Third World meant being *Black*. To be Black was to be *Oppressed*: to be a constantly hurting casualty of the twin evils of slavery and colonialism.

But "the Third World is an artificial construction of the West—an ideological Empire on which the sun is always setting." It is another lie: "In the name of the Third World, we madden ourselves with untruth."

Though he was conspicuously sane, there were times when Naipaul maddened himself with truth. As a man, as a writer, he was intensely sensitive and sometimes prickly, someone who might need to spend a whole evening talking over a whiskey bottle to exorcise some faint unpleasantness, some small slight. The same hypersensitivity informs everything he wrote. He saw—"felt" might be better—that the great question of our age is the relationship between peoples and civilizations and cultures. Who is "we" and who are "they"? Which values should be universal and absolute, which local and relative? What, indeed, do "civilization" and "culture" mean? These were his themes, and *An Unfinished Journey* shows how supremely well equipped he was to tackle them. It contains, on one of its pages, a motto for his work: "The longer I live, the more convinced I become that one of the greatest honors we can confer on other people is to see them as they are; to recognize not only that they exist but that they exist in specific ways and have specific realities." Those of us who knew and loved him mourn him in our own way, but anybody who reads and thinks should read his books. They too will mourn him. He had much more to say.

GEOFFREY WHEATCROFT

Geoffrey Wheatcroft is a columnist with the *Sunday Telegraph* of London and the author of *The Randlords: The Exploits and Exploitations of South Africa's Mining Magnates*, to be reissued in paperback by Touchstone this June.

CLAUSEWITZIAN ECHOES

Strategy: The Logic of War and Peace by Edward N. Luttwak

(Belknap/Harvard University Press, 283 pp., $20)

One of the many changes in American political culture and intellectual style brought about by the Second World War and its aftermath has been the growth of a large body of literature on the use of armed force. Many of these writings are ahistorical. They are addressed to current and future problems, and rarely pay serious attention to the past. There is, however, one striking exception to their contemporary orientation—the new interest in the theories of Carl von Clausewitz. Even more remarkable, this interest is not limited to a small number of writers on military theory and practice; it has come to be shared by segments of the larger intellectual and political community.

The most recent English translation of Clausewitz's major work, the unfinished manuscript *On War*, has been reprinted 11 times since its first publication in 1976, and many copies of older English versions continue to be sold each year. That is an astonishing contemporary presence for a scholarly and occasionally technical treatise written over a century and a half ago, the more so since *On War* is not particularly easy to read. It is a long book, its historical references are often to obscure events, and the argument is complicated. Nor is the book's relevance to today's non-specialist reader immediately apparent. What can an analysis of war, written at a time of muzzle-loaders and cavalry charges, offer a generation whose existence depends on nuclear deterrence?

Some observers have linked the new appeal of *On War* to the spread of America's military commitments around the globe since the 1940s, and to our society's simultaneous abhorrence of and fascination with violence. But Clausewitz is fashionable elsewhere, too. Since the 1950s, translations of *On War* have appeared in nearly a dozen languages. The concern with war, the need to understand the nature of a force that in its current forms has achieved the power of unlimited destruction, is not unique to any particular society. Evidently Clausewitz is thought to offer insights into the processes of war, and into the links between war and national policy, that transcend the technological and political conditions of their own time. And it is true that no other writer in the Western literature on war has searched for universals and general principles with the same determination. All this has brought about what is sometimes called a Clausewitz Renaissance. Edward Luttwak's new book is an interesting, unusual product of this developing recognition of Clausewitz's commitment to a high level of analysis.

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A further glance at the Clausewitz Renaissance will help place Luttwak's book in context. Most readers and interpreters of Clausewitz seem to fall into two groups. Some read *On War* (Clausewitz's many other writings remain largely ignored) as the product of a powerful, conceptualizing intellect—as they might read Machiavelli or Montesquieu, to mention two writers who influenced Clausewitz's own intellectual development. Others read his ideas above all in the hope of discovering a guide, or at least points of reference, to military policy and action today.

The practical concerns of this second group are so overpowering that its members are unable to admit, let alone to accept, Clausewitz's purpose in writing *On War*, although he spells out his intentions clearly and repeatedly. "Theory," he writes in a characteristic passage, "need not be a positive doctrine, a sort of manual for action.... Theory is meant to educate the mind, not to accompany the soldier on the battlefield." In short, Clausewitz writes as an analyst, not as an advocate. He is not interested in devising methods for winning battles or wars. He is content to identify and to study the constituent elements of war and their dynamic relationships: for example, the polarity, or the dialectic, of war, which means that no action (whether the advance of a tank or a change in national policy) exists in isolation, but stimulates reactions by the opponent; or the tendency of one side to respond to the other by committing more resources to the struggle, which in turn may induce the first to follow suit, starting a process of escalation; or the influence of politics, which may (but need not) bring escalation to a halt when the level of violence becomes disproportionate to the political object of the war.

CLAUSEWITZ developed hypotheses such as these in a spirit of scientific inquiry. He wanted to construct a general theory that would hold true for all wars, from the quarrels of prehistoric tribes to the conflicts of modern states. But too often readers treat his ideas not as explanatory hypotheses, but as principles from which to draw pragmatic "lessons." Pure theory is of less interest to most of us than are the practical results that may be derived from it. This is particularly true of war, a field of human activity that has never generated much detached speculation. Inevitably, people feel a stronger need to win wars, or to do away with war,

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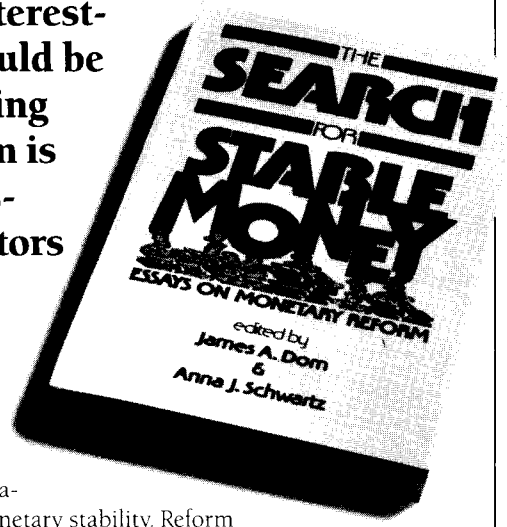

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than to understand war. An additional inducement for ignoring Clausewitz's warning that he is not writing a manual or formulating a set of principles is the inclusion in *On War* of statements on strategic, operational, and even tactical matters. These references are merely the raw material from which theory is created and against which it must be tested. But to many readers Clausewitz's observations on the advantages of a flank attack or on methods of defending a river-crossing have always seemed not only the most comprehensible but also the most important parts of his work.

The persistent misreading of *On War* is a telling sign of the pragmatic bias of American society, a bias further intensified by the dangers that threaten us. Yet there exists still a third category of readers of Clausewitz—a small group, judging by the literature—that respects *On War* precisely for what it is, that does not search the text for doctrine but whose thinking about war today is influenced nonetheless by it. Harry G. Summers's *On Strategy: The Vietnam War in Context*, which critically examines American policy in Southeast Asia in the light of Clausewitz's ideas on the interdependence of political and military effort, is an example of such a reading. Edward Luttwak's *Strategy* belongs to the same tradition—a tradition defined not by adherence to a particular dogma but by recognition of the permanent interaction of politics and force, and by a belief in the cognitive promise of realistic theory.

THE AIM of Luttwak's book is to advance our understanding, not to advocate specific policies. Still, concern about the manner in which issues of national security are decided in America is an unspoken theme. Luttwak's book is a rejection of straightforward "engineering" solutions for problems that are as much political and psychological as military, and a rejection of the compartmentalized vision of specialists, who see one segment of the problem and let it stand for the whole. But Luttwak's practical concerns do not interfere with his analytic approach. His purpose, he writes, is "to define strategy . . . to uncover the pervasive logic that conditions war even on the smallest scale as well as the adversarial transactions of nations in peacetime."

In several respects this statement is characteristic of much that follows—in the very broad limits that the author

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establishes for his subject; in his adoption of the classic Clausewitzian view of war and peace as parts of a continuum that blend and flow into each other; in his willingness at times to abandon precise terminology, which allows him to shift from "strategy" to "war" without explanation, as though the two were synonymous. When Luttwak writes that he wants to "uncover" the logic of strategy, he does not mean to suggest, of course, that he will reveal something that is unknown, or only vaguely recognized; the nature and workings of strategy have always been understood, though never by enough people within the context of their times and conditions. What Luttwak does is to trace the interactions of some of the elements that go into the planning and the preparing for war, and the dynamic of some aspects of the fighting itself.

THE FIRST QUARTER of Luttwak's book is an extended gloss on some of Clausewitz's propositions: everything in war is very simple, but even the simplest thing is difficult; accidents, mistakes, emotion, the unexpected, all create "friction," which blocks the smooth running of the military machine; war is rarely one single explosion of violence, but extends over time, with the antagonists acting and reacting; even the most successful offensive has a "culminating point," and if that point is passed the attack weakens and may expose itself to defeat. Luttwak explicates these and similar propositions with a wealth of historical examples. His familiarity with history—not often found, as I noted earlier, in the work of today's military analysts—is one of the strengths of his book. From this discussion Luttwak develops the first of his two main themes: what he calls the paradoxical, rather than the linear, logic of strategy. Paradoxical logic would argue that a good road, precisely because it is good, may be dangerous to use; or that the introduction of a new, powerful weapons system may stimulate effective countermeasures, while an inferior system may score heavily because its flaws seemed to make a strong response unnecessary.

In the second, longer part of the book, Luttwak develops an analytic scheme to help us understand at least some of the paradoxical elements he has described. There are, he argues, two dimensions of strategy. One is the vertical dimension, made up of the plans and actions of each party to a conflict. These are imagined as occurring on a series of different levels. On each level, the antagonists confront each other; they act and react. The interplay of weapons development and production occurs on the first level. Above it is the level of tactical combat. Tactical actions are usually subordinate parts of larger actions involving many units on the operational level. "Events at the operational level can be very large in scale, but never autonomous"; they are governed by, but they themselves also influence, the conflict of armies at the level of theater strategy. Theater strategy is—or should be—subordinate to the highest level, the level of grand strategy, "where all that is military happens within the much broader context of domestic governance, international politics, economic activity, and their ancillaries."

The actions of each party, distributed across these levels, are linked. For instance, tactical needs may influence weapons design, and weapons design will have tactical consequences. Or, "many tactical events make up the operational level, even as the latter determines their significance." But all these relationships are still only the vertical dimension of strategy. The horizontal dimension refers to the conflicts and competitions between antagonists on each level, or, as Luttwak writes, to "the dynamic logic that unfolds concurrently within each level."

SUCCESS, according to Luttwak's scheme, depends on two conditions: first, a relatively effective coordination between the levels of the vertical dimension, something that is difficult to achieve because each level affords only a partial perspective on the conflict; and second, a harmony between the vertical dimension and the highest level of the horizontal dimension, that of grand strategy. Even major successes at the level of theater strategy may not meet the needs of grand strategy, and consequently may be pointless. As an example, Luttwak cites Rommel's successes in North Africa, which occurred while the fate of Germany was being decided in Russia. On the other hand, North Vietnam won its war against the United States by modest achievements in the vertical dimension, which were effectively exploited on the level of propaganda and politico-military strategy.

Luttwak's system, his vertical and horizontal dimensions of strategy (or of war), has no existence in reality. It is simply a method of analysis. How well it works

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depends on individual attitudes. Some will find its graphic separation of the components of friendly and hostile processes very helpful. To others, the two-dimensional pattern may seem needlessly complex, even confusing; after all, the vertical dimension is itself made up of horizontal layers, and it is only their links and interactions that produce verticality. Different geometric patterns are equally conceivable. Finally what matters is to acquire, in one way or another, the clearest possible understanding of the problems of organizing resources, and of employing them against an opponent, if war becomes advisable, or if it cannot be avoided.

This brings us back to Luttwak's first theme, the paradoxical logic of strategy. Since one party to a conflict will try to obstruct the intentions of the other, linear logic, which often calls for the easy procedure, may not succeed. But perhaps to underscore the need to avoid the traps of the obvious, Luttwak makes paradoxical logic out to be more unusual, and less subject to common sense, than in fact it is. It has often been remarked that in most adversarial contexts, in peacetime as well as in war, paradoxical logic *is* common sense—or, at least, combined with linear logic, it adds up to common sense. This has been recognized for a very long time. Some 50 years ago the British military critic Basil Liddell Hart argued in a well-known book, *Strategy: The Indirect Approach*, that avoiding the obvious was the basis of most successful strategies in history. Indeed, the word "paradox" itself was applied to military and political conflicts almost as soon as it entered the language. The Oxford English Dictionary cites an early example from Thomas Fuller's 1639 history of the Crusades, *Holy War*: "It is therefore no paradox to say, that in some case the strength of a kingdom doth consist in the weakness of it."

LUTTWAK'S occasional overstatements and ambiguities make one regret that his book was not given one last, systematic review. Precise definitions may not suit a subject as changeable as war, but it is no pedantry to wish for greater consistency, not least for a clear distinction between "war" and "strategy." (A working differentiation might be that strategy is the general intention and war is what actually happens.) Luttwak also places more weight on his analytic concepts than they can bear. An example is his treatment of Clausewitz's propositions that nothing in war is ever final and that even success may lead to defeat. Luttwak illustrates this paradox with a sequence of events from the Second World War. German victory on the Continent in 1940 deprived the British of any means to carry on the war except by air. Because precision bombing in daylight proved too costly, however,

> Bomber Command had to fly at night, when its aircraft could hit no target smaller than a fairly large city. Thus the paradoxical reward that the Germans obtained for the victory of their army, and the quality of their fighter forces and anti-aircraft artillery . . . was the beginning of the destruction of German cities.

Some such cause and effect may well have occurred; but Luttwak is describing the paradox of war, even of life, against which the paradoxical logic of strategy is largely powerless.

Still, such lapses should not be overemphasized. Luttwak has written a serious book on an important subject. His ideas about strategy, and about the analysis of strategy, are imaginative and always challenging. They will advance the present debate on national security policies. And from a historical perspective, his book has the further merit of demonstrating, by its many echoes of Clausewitz, how theories of a former age may continue to have something to say to our own.

PETER PARET

Peter Paret is professor of history at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton. A revised edition of his biography *Clausewitz and the State* (Princeton University Press) recently appeared.

NOSE JOBS

How I Grew
by Mary McCarthy

(Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 278 pp., $16.95)

In *How I Grew*, Mary McCarthy allows us to peek under her thinking cap. "I was born as a mind during 1925, my bodily birth having taken place in 1912," states McCarthy, whose *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood* covered the limbo years of her intellect, when candles and incense burned in the bat cave. "Throughout the thirteen years in between, obviously, I must have had thoughts and mental impressions, perhaps even some sort of specifically cerebral life that I no longer remember. Almost from the beginning, I had been aware of myself as 'bright.'" About which one can hear the Church Lady from *Saturday Night Live* commenting, "Well, aren't we special?"

Though McCarthy hastens to add that a great many children, and perhaps animals too, shared her aptness for reasoning, *How I Grew* emphasizes the elect, select quality of being "bright"—of being a diamond among rough clods. Young Mary seeks out the special. It isn't merely a matter of choice, but of gravitation. Her preference for thinkers extends even to the old Polo Grounds, home of the New York Giants, where she roots for Bill Terry, Dick Bartell, and lefty Carl Hubbell. "It will be seen that, apart from pitchers, my favorite players were all infielders—the brains of a baseball nine."

The infield chatter of intellectuals is one of the constants in McCarthy's fiction, from *The Group*, *The Groves of Academe*, and *Cannibals and Missionaries* to, most hoity-toitily, *The Oasis*, which was mislabeled a novel. McCarthy complained to the *Paris Review*: "It's a *conte*, a *conte philosophique*." And as famous as McCarthy's stylish attack in her nonfiction is for its frosty glamour, its ivory gloss, its royal elevation, its flirty ironies peeping through the parade march of rigorous analysis, a casual, off-duty warmth shines through whenever she writes of those teammates—Hannah Arendt, Nicola Chiaromonte, F. W. Dupee—who make up her all-star infield. They are comrades in her real-life *conte philosophique*. Friendship, she declares in her new memoir, "is essential to intellectuals. It is probably the growth hormone the mind requires as it begins its activity of producing and exchanging ideas. You can date the evolving life of a mind, like the age of a tree, by the rings of friendship formed by the expanding central trunk. In the course of my history, not love or marriage so much as friendship

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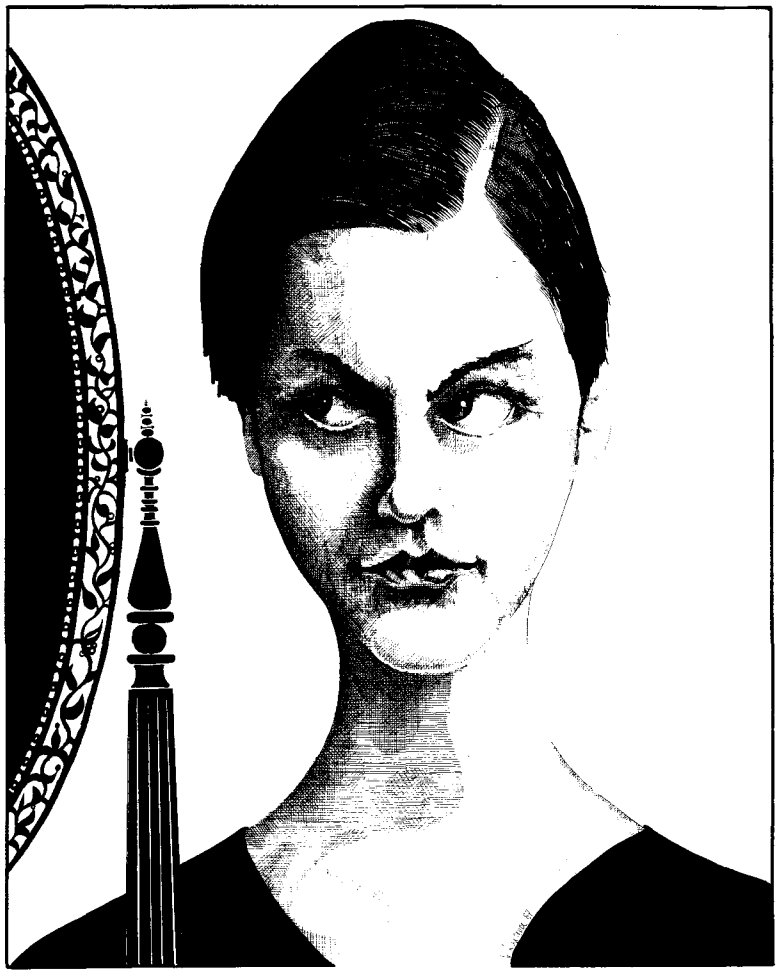
has promoted growth." Aren't we special? But surely non-intellectuals need friendship, too. Or are they—we—simply meant to mill around in the stands as extras, a lumpy mass of spectators making background noise at the big game? Who will count our rings, Church Lady?

And if McCarthy prizes friendship so highly, why does *How I Grew* read like a series of small punctures, petty beyond belief? Friendship isn't nearly so potent or present in this book as McCarthy's brisk air of exclusivity. She masks her hauteur with a smile set in cool marble, as she plays hostess, passing around amusing anecdotes on the snack tray. But the mask, alas, keeps slipping. Where *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood* was *written*, its sentences engraved on the soft recesses of the past with a silver stylus, *How I Grew* has the mild fuss of an ongoing monologue. "But I am digressing in the middle of a digression, piling Ossa on Pelion, we Latinists would say."

McCarthy employs the antique convention of directly addressing the reader. This device carries a pert spark of comedy when McCarthy recounts how she lost her virginity in the front seat of a roadster, her seducer (the cad) lifting his sagging condom up to the light: "No, Reader, it did not break." But it becomes a bit coy by the time McCarthy is tumbling bare into a bed of nettles, drunk on the night before graduation: "Not to leave you in suspense, Reader, I gave the valedictory." McCarthy is also partial to starting her paragraphs with pithy comments and quaint ejaculations. "Oh!" "But stop!" "Well! Necessity is the mother of invention . . . ." Twee as its title, *How I Grew* digresses to the point of dither. As a dreamy lass McCarthy can't decide whether to be a Carmelite nun or the bride to the Pretender to the throne of France. Decisions, decisions.

> There was another problem connected with my ambition. Should I marry the Duke de Guise, the actual Pretender, or his son, the Count de Paris, who was nearer my age? The Duke de Guise seemed the better bet; though old, he had the acknowledged kingly title, while the Count de Paris was a bird in the bush. Moreover, my source (the Sunday magazine section) did not show any pictures of the Count, so that I had no idea what he looked like. Whereas you see plenty of photos of the Duke, gray-haired but erect in his bearing, thin-waisted and extremely tall. Or am I fusing newspaper likenesses of the modern Pretender with the old Duc de Guise, head of the anti-Protestant League, a giant measuring seven feet tall, who was felled at Blois by the order of Henri III, measuring his full length (I read somewhere) at the foot of the king's bed? Such leakage or "running" as of non-fast colors is a common occurrence in the memory.



DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

It's certainly a common occurrence in *How I Grew*, where our heroine is often at a loss:

> I cannot remember what provision there was for overshoes and rubbers; it hardly ever snowed in Seattle, but it rained a lot.
>
> And once, it seems to me, as I was skirting the school playfield, a ball thrown or kicked by him [Larry Judson, local football heartthrob] hit me in the midriff, making me feel like St. Francis receiving the stigmata. But this memory is very fuzzy. I am not sure whether it was a football or a baseball or even a tennis ball and maybe I have imagined the whole thing.

To be fair, leaky recall is a problem McCarthy has anticipated. Asked by the *Paris Review* if she planned to continue her personal saga after *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood*, McCarthy replied that writing about her later self would make more demands on her candor. "One would have to be really old, I think, really quite an old person—and by that time I don't know what sort of shape one's memory would be in." Granted, her memory is in better shape that her enemy Lillian Hellman's was when Hellman unspooled her ambiguous *Maybe*. Yet even *Maybe* had a psychological tease that helped pull the reader through its pea soup. Overshoes or rubbers, football or baseball, none of the perplexities in McCarthy's memoir matter; and whatever else Mary McCarthy has been over the years, she's always mattered.

For some McCarthy's pertinence has been a negative factor in her art. As a novelist she's cleverly adept at putting people in their place (too clever, too adept), ushering them before a Petty Claims court of proper conduct and finding them instantly guilty. In his pulverizing review of *The Group*, Norman Mailer brilliantly banged away at the belief that McCarthy's fiction was characterized by stagecraft—"sniffings, snippings and clippings, codicils of taste, and quick exits for bad taste." The codicils of taste are strict in *How I Grew*, the quick exits many. Condescension rains on those who fail to display their minds prettily enough. "She was rather intelligent, I discovered, though you might not guess it from her grammar and pronunciation . . . ." "At that very time, as I now reckon it, I had probably made my first intellectual

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friend, if 'intellectual' is the right word for 'Ted' (really Ethel) Rosenberg, whose organ of reflection was perhaps less fully developed than her bump of sensibility."

Pseuds fare better than out and out philistines, however. How's this for a pelting of snippings and clippings?

> I am sorry now for Isabel, who eventually tried to be friends with me, sorry for her childlessness, her insuperable shallowness, which could not be remedied by travel, by incessant "keeping up" with art, music, architecture, gardening, gourmet cooking—all the known deepeners and broadeners except, I guess, sex. I do not think she wanted to be what she was—a person short on true emotion. She was a clever housewife; she was economical, could sew her own curtains and hang them; she taught me how to do fringed tablecloths and matching napkins for bridge tables by pulling out threads from the raveling edge of the material. She also showed me how to make a "sandwich loaf" with little sandwiches inside, though I was too clumsy to follow her instructions. She was onto icebox cookies early. She knew how to cut bread and spread colored fillings on the bias to produce a rainbow effect. Naturally she was one of the first, after the Second War, to catch onto drip-dry, *so* useful for travel . . . .

Oh, naturally! If you were Isabel, wouldn't you want to insert Mary McCarthy into a sandwich loaf, *so* tasty after a long day under the hair dryer. But Isabel, like so many of the targets in *How I Grew*, isn't around to receive McCarthy's barbs. She's one of the lucky dead. (As is her former husband, Edmund Wilson, who makes a cameo appearance as the little engine that could, chugging through a speech, "heavy, puffy, nervous and a terrible speaker.")

The legendary baseball flake Mickey Rivers—who, it should be noted, played the outfield—once claimed that a certain player was so ugly that when he walked by he made your clothes wrinkle. McCarthy isn't nearly so witty, but she writes about her classmates as if her clothes were still wrinkling. She zeroes in on pitted skin and thick flesh. "When she laughs, she chortles; her fattish shoulders shake." She claims a scalp in the contest for May Queen (the year is 1928) when she campaigns against one girl in order to boost her own candidate. "Something happened, I have no idea what. But I turned on that girl with a vengeance and never forgave whatever it was she said or did. It was my idea to put up Margaret Carpenter gainst her [McCarthy having just informed us how limited Carpenter was in the looks department]," and so every day McCarthy amplifies "how repellent Katie Urquhart really was—that sallow skin, those yellow eyes, those avid noseholes, almost scary. I was boldly drawing on the capital of my Poe recitations. And our side won! I had discovered in myself a gift for politics and electioneering and tasted the thrill of power."

Think of it. Nearly six decades after a May Queen contest, McCarthy is still drumming away on the sallow skin of some girl over some forgotten trespass. Old beaux get the big-pore treatment, too. "The one I liked best was homely, with yellow hair and big teeth and a stooping walk." Wait, it gets worse. " 'He certainly is a handsome man,' [McCarthy's grandfather] would say without fail, to the amusement of the ungainly subject himself when I repeated it." Such tact.

The biggest item in McCarthy's inventory of personal defects is usually the nose. "Attached to them, like a burr, was long-nosed, nosy, dark-eyed Josephine Matthews," begins a typical entry in McCarthy's ugly file. From *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood* we know that McCarthy wished to improve her own nose ("it was too snub, and I had been sleeping with a clothespin on it to give it a more aristocratic shape"). I'm afraid that this preoccupation with noses has to do with McCarthy's attitudes toward Jews. McCarthy, of course, is one-quarter Jewish; she had a Jewish grandmother, which she has dragged into print as often as Gore Vidal has his slim connection to the Kennedys.

Not that she has been entirely exploitative; in *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood*, she wrote extravagantly of her Jewish grandmother, who haunted department stores in her furs, pearls, and lorgnon, her botched face-lift (the work of a hack who "had pumped her face full of hot wax") hidden discreetly behind a dotted veil. In *How I Grew*, McCarthy's grandmother becomes a source of squirming distress. When a friend visits her grandmother, McCarthy worries that her Terrible Secret will emerge. Will her grandmother's "very slightly hooked, 'aquiline' nose" betray her? Not to leave you in suspense, Reader: "After Frani's return from her Seattle visit, there was nothing in her conversation or behavior to show whether she had noticed anything . . . what shall I say . . . Levantine?" (Her ellipses.)

BUT MCCARTHY herself is always on the lookout for . . . what shall I say . . . Levantine signposts? This leads to dreary funny-you-don't-look-Jewish references to "darling Susie Lowenstein, with her dainty retroussé nose" and "charming golden snub-nosed" Elly Coleman. Indeed, Susie, from McCarthy's seminary days at Annie Wright, and Elly, from her college days at Vassar, link in McCarthy's mind. Hearing the improbable news that Elly is Jewish (oh, ha-ha, how the girls in the dormitory laugh!), McCarthy recovers her poise, "helped by a memory of darling Susie Loewenstein in the convent—red-gold curls, retroussé nose, she had looked quite a lot like Elly." (Same nose, but somehow Susie has picked up an extra *e* in her last name.) Furthermore, this comedy of errors has a happy ending: "It seems to me now that Elly's mother and grandmother were launching her that

NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET

The elms looked down, struck by the fact
As by an ax, of the destruction wrought
All about them. The local, nest-dwelling
Giant hairless squirrels were dying off,
Limbs wizening, stomachs bloating up,
Livers sickening, brains on the blink.
The sick ones were going at a faster rate
Than the new growth could replace them.
Soon, by the elms' calculation, the whole
Moribund species would be extinct. A pity,
For they had provided a constant source
Of wonder, what with their foolish fear
Of sunlight and their nightly worship at
Glowing shrines, each a miniature sun.
There by the shrines' pallid effulgence
They would caress the desiccated tissues
Of mummified trees—a horrid rite
But, for the elms, unable to conceive
A similar fate befalling themselves, an act
Imbued with romance. When they were gone
The neighborhood would never be the same.
But what were the elms to do? Immortal
Themselves, they were as powerless
As the gods of high Olympus to confer
Immortality on those they loved.

TOM DISCH

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year all fitted out, like a spruce little privateer, on the trade routes of upper Jewish matrimony. And the reader can rest assured that she secured her prize. She left Vassar at the end of freshman year." If I could describe this book in a single phrase it would be *eminently creepy*.

I do not mean to make a cheap-shot charge that McCarthy is anti-Semitic, eager to disavow that part of her that is Jewish (too easily symbolized by her clothespinned nose). She worries the subject in *How I Grew*, admitting to "a bottom layer of hostility" toward Jews in this culture and the "Jewish connection" in her own family tree. She even says that if her impulse to write came out of her "allowed quota of private, unvoiced anti-Semitism," she ought to give up writing. But her worrying barely stirs the surface; it seems rather abstract. Whereas the crass specificity of her anecdotes makes one wince:

> As if in confirmation of this disagreeable thesis [i.e., that her impetus to write was based on a desire to disavow her part Jewishness], memory suddenly presents me with the roommate—a big-hipped, hook-nosed girl from Montana—whom the school had foisted on me that first fall and whom I had asked to be separated from after two weeks. Maybe we had both asked to be separated. She did not like Annie Wright—and never returned, I think, after what must have been Christmas vacation.

One can almost see the poor girl running screaming across the state line.

But this isn't so much evidence of anti-Semitism as it is of this book's all-around insensitivity. McCarthy awards her no more compassion than she does anyone else in the book with bad skin, a big nose, and no mind. You or I, surveying the shabby lapses in our lives, might feel sympathy and remorse and maybe even shame over those people we've injured and spurned and misunderstood. Not the author of *How I Grew*. She's an "intellectual."

The sad thing is that McCarthy couldn't leave well enough alone with *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood*. That book is a classic of snow glitter and sensory heat, family portraiture and self-revelation. This book, handsomely done-up (nice photos), is disposable snobbery: doodling from on high. Mary McCarthy has gotten too damned retroussé.

JAMES WOLCOTT

James Wolcott writes regularly for *Texas Monthly* and *Vanity Fair*.

THE MEANING OF MEANING

Staring at the Sun
by Julian Barnes

(Knopf, 197 pp., $15.95)

"What had I been after?" the 30-year-old protagonist of Julian Barnes's first novel, *Metroland*, wondered as he looked back over his schoolboyhood, when phrases and poses from his favorite French writers marked him as a debonair rebel in suburban London:

> For a start, a vivid, explosive, enriching self-knowledge. And then, I also dreamed about finding the key to some vital synthesis of art and life. How naive it sounds, put like that. Still, the larger the question, the more naive it always sounds. It was the only subject I'd been seriously interested in.

It is also the subject that has persistently drawn Barnes, whose fictional treatments of it so far have been notable for their serious and witty sophistication. In his startlingly unfamiliar new novel, he sets out to restore naïveté to the question and to the quest.

Barnes's interest in the perplexing relations between life and art will come as no surprise to admirers of his third book, *Flaubert's Parrot*, the tour de force that introduced him to American readers in 1984. A novel about a would-be literary biographer's bewildering pursuit of his subject, it featured the same kind of book-loving, slightly bashful male who inhabited Barnes's previous two novels. (Both *Metroland* and *Before She Met Me*, originally published in 1980 and 1982, have been recently issued in paperback in this country.) The theme was also fa-

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miliar, but developed with new narrative virtuosity: through both its structure and its substance, *Flaubert's Parrot* succeeded in showing how many problems the answers, or lack of answers, to that large question about life and art could pose.

Staring at the Sun looks like a model of unallusive simplicity by comparison. Barnes turns his back on the library, and his adventurous innocence proves remarkably successful. In fact, despite the unusual protagonist he introduces, his approach might have been predicted. Much of the literary paraphernalia in *Flaubert's Parrot*, after all, was designed to mock the bearers of that kind of baggage. The narrator, Geoffrey Braithwaite, a retired doctor and ardent amateur Flaubert scholar, aptly summed up the often frustrating results of turning to books for answers to the big question, Is there shape and meaning to my life, and to the lives of the people I love?

> Books say: She did this because. Life says: She did this. Books are where things are explained to you; life is where things aren't. I'm not surprised some people prefer books. Books make sense of life. The only problem is that the lives they make sense of are other people's lives, never your own.

IN *STARING AT THE SUN*, Barnes strips away the layers of literary reference and allows his narrative to progress more by suggestive images than by arguments—though not without first quoting Chekhov as an authority for his impressionistic approach: "You ask me what life is? It is like asking what a carrot is. A carrot is a carrot, and nothing more is known." Beneath the surface simplicity of the prose and the story, the novel conveys a sense of mystery more reminiscent of fable than of the cerebral fiction Barnes has written before.

His protagonist, Jean Serjeant, has almost nothing in common with her well-read predecessors. The daughter of a grocery store manager in a village outside London, she is someone with a simple heart and an untutored mind—someone to whom it has never occurred to prefer books. Not that life has struck her as particularly explicable. On the contrary, as a girl coming of age during World War II, she was constantly, profoundly bewildered—by everything. The first section of the novel, which takes Jean from girlhood to her marriage to a dull policeman named Michael, is a remarkably successful evocation of an innocence and ignorance so comprehensive that they threaten to elude words. But Barnes manages, through a succession of scenes that work like vivid slides slipped deftly into a projector, to recover, or discover, the innocence at the heart of the question about the meaning of life—a question that we generally assume reflects knowingness, or at least requires educated answers.

In Jean's youthful simplicity, Barnes dramatizes the blundering toward some less articulate—and thus perhaps more accurate—formulation of the question. Or rather questions, for Jean is dimly aware that the real challenge lies not in discovering any one right answer, but in recognizing the paradoxical importance and pointlessness of all the right questions: "The trouble was, how could you know what questions to ask? It seemed to her that you were in a position to ask a really correct question only if you already knew the answer, and what was the point in that?" So the oddly aloof yet curious girl simply listens, most intently to her eccentric Uncle Leslie, who is her baffling guide to the strange spectacle of life, and to Lieutenant Prosser, a pilot billeted with the Serjeants during the war, who introduces her to the equally curious prospect of death. Meanwhile, she cultivates a blind questioning habit inside her head. On the brink of adulthood, she ventures to air a few of the riddles she has stored up—such as why Charles Lindbergh only ate one and a half of the five sandwiches he took with him when he flew the Atlantic—to mystified Michael. This is one of Jean's more ridiculous puzzles, posed in the deadpan style of an actor in a Robert Wilson play, and the point seems to be not to suggest hidden profundity but to convey the pathos inherent in the act of questioning. There may be no "correct" questions, but Jean is very confused—often comically so. Considerably more important than her sandwich problem is her failure to figure out the right questions to ask Michael about sex, and she doesn't know enough to feel more than vaguely let down.

But after 20 years of deadened, childless life with Michael, which are quickly summarized, Jean suddenly surfaces pregnant and purposeful. The second section of the novel follows Jean from her decision to leave Michael through roughly 20 more years of life on the move with her son, Gregory. Barnes faces a considerably more difficult task in trying to capture the emerging consciousness of his strangely elusive character in middle age. Where Jean was once notable for her passivity and opacity, she's now visited by unexpected energy and insight, a disorienting evolution. But conventional psychological development clearly isn't what Barnes has in mind, for he purposely telescopes the initial transformation into a few pages, as Jean surprises both herself and Michael with her newfound determination. Her experience is more in the nature of a spiritual awakening:

> She wanted to say, Look, it's not really anything to do with you; the decision, that is. I want a more difficult life, that's all. What I really want is a first-rate life. I may not get it, but the only chance I have lies in getting out of a second-rate life. I may fail completely, but I do want to try. It's to do with me, not you; so don't worry.

Jean's rebirth is abrupt, but to convey the erratic growth of her critical spirit Barnes both requires and resists some greater sense of continuity. He wisely decides to send her on trips—pilgrimages that provide opportunities for her soul to respond and for him to stage a kind of allegorical picaresque adventure. After a series of mundane moves from job to job with her quiet son, Jean undertakes a panoramic odyssey alone, flying from continent to continent on a tour of her own idiosyncratic version of the Seven Wonders of the World. Flight is the reigning image in the narrative and also of the narrative, which itself skims over expanses of space and time, doubles back, lands smoothly in unusual places, then takes off again to follow Jean's runic observations.

IN FACT, Barnes runs the risk of making Jean too much of a riddle: turn the page, and her latest action or reaction sometimes comes as too disconcerting a surprise. It's difficult to know what degree of wisdom to expect, or accept, from her, since Barnes has set himself the challenge of charting her evolution of soul with few literary signposts or worldly words to help guide him, or her, or us. Although he conveys the psychological exoticism of this spiritual character with surprising success most of the time, there are moments when the standards of articulateness simply seem confused, and Jean sounds more like her author or his previous protagonists than like herself.

Her global tour leads her to an epiphany of sorts at the rim of the Grand Canyon, fittingly enough: it's nature, not art, that serves as Jean's guide to the mysteries of meaning, or meaningless-

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ness. Yet her thoughts on that occasion don't sound so suitable. In fact, as Jean reaches for abstract formulations that don't really belong in her repertoire, it could almost be Geoffrey Braithwaite meditating:

> The Canyon stunned her into uncertainty. Over dinner she sat thinking, and tried not to use words as she did so; or at least to use them gingerly. *Therefore* was the word she allowed to set most solid in her mind. The Canyon, *therefore* . . . If the Canyon is the question, what is the answer? If the Canyon is the answer, what is the question? The Canyon, *therefore* . . . ? Even the skeptic's response, the Canyon, *therefore nothing*, seemed a large answer. It was said that one of the worst tragedies of the spirit was to be born with a religious sense into a world where belief was no longer possible. Was it an equal tragedy to be born without a religious sense into a world where belief *was* possible?

In the last section of the novel, Barnes surmounts the problem of Jean's sometimes incongruous reflections by letting her, now nearing 100 in the second decade of the 21st century, recede into the background and by giving the intellectual speculations to Gregory. Elliptically but vividly, Barnes conveys the naive skepticism of Jean's old age with much the same success as he did the skeptical naïveté of her childhood. She's calmly bewildered by the questions now as then, but she doesn't expect answers anymore. Meanwhile Gregory abruptly emerges from the background as a more familiar Barnes character, the kind who quotes French artists, asks abstract questions, and speculates indefatigably and often comically about answers (he makes a list of 14 possible solutions to "the God question"). Obsessed by death and by the mystery of life, he finally consults the technology of the 21st century, the General Purposes Computer. He logs in for a series of dialogues with its classified function, called TAT, for The Absolute Truth—and gets, not surprisingly, a runaround. (On the heels of John Updike's *Roger's Version*, Barnes's book augurs a new fictional trend: metaphysical computer games.)

It is a clever verbal display, to be expected from a master of serious, suggestive banter like Barnes. In case anyone wants proof that he hasn't lost his skill at the old games, here it is—and the agile interplay looks a little too much like the easy way out. But the closing scene is very different: a quietly spectacular chase after the sun that captures the uncharacteristic spirit of Barnes's new novel at its best. Remembering Lieutenant Prosser, who told her of seeing the sun rise twice one morning on a flying run during the war (a sudden drop in altitude allowed him to watch the sun come up over the horizon a second time), Jean goes up in a plane with Gregory to see the sun set twice. The first time "the earth seemed to rise like slapping water and drag the sun down." In the sun's second descent, seen as the plane quickly climbs:

> The fingers of cloud no longer lay between her and the sun. They were face to face. She did not, however, give it any sign of greeting. She did not smile, and she tried very hard not to blink. The sun's descent seemed quicker this time, a smooth slipping away. The earth did not greedily chase it, but lay flatly back with its mouth open.

In his fourth novel, Barnes is after ordinary miracles like that, and more often than not he gets them.

ANN HULBERT

CHINA SYNDROME

An Insular Possession by Timothy Mo

(Random House, 593 pp., $19.95)

What will happen after 1997? This is the first thing people ask when one tells them that one lives in Hong Kong. It is not the sort of question posed about any other place. Who knows what will happen in 1997 in New York, Delhi, or Tokyo? But in no other place is the future tied to a specific date, to a formal agreement that a modern capitalist colony will be handed over to a troubled Communist state. Nor can one think of any other major city whose origin can be so clearly traced to a date. In the case of Hong Kong, the date is August 29, 1842,

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when the island was ceded to Britain in the Treaty of Nanking. (In fact several thousand British sailors and merchants had already moved there in 1839, having been forced to leave Canton.) An Australian journalist once called Hong Kong a borrowed place on borrowed time; but the time is now fixed. The cold chronological number gives people the illusion of certainty, the illusion that the future can be predicted.

This is the paradox of Hong Kong. Its future is both fixed and fluid, predictable and utterly uncertain. This contradiction between the roaring tide of history and the attempts by men to fix it, to make virtually scientific sense of it, is one of the key themes of Timothy Mo's very clever novel about the genesis of Hong Kong. The first sentence of the book introduces the main metaphor for the epic story that follows: "The river succors and impedes native and foreigner alike; it limits and it enables, it isolates and it joins." The image of the river as the tide of history keeps on returning:

> At least the river's bars are a predictable ambush; they become submerged and exposed with the rise and fall of a tide but they do not change position. It is the river itself which is fickle and mischievous. It is never the same for longer than a season and in ten years will cut itself new channels, flood what was land, retreat from its bed to leave bird-haunted mud flats and strange smooth stones, create peninsulas and enisle what was once part of the main.

And on the final page of the novel, the hero of the story, a scholarly American called Gideon Chase, makes the metaphor explicit: "Treaties, Congresses, Conventions mean nothing, except to the participants—the stuff of history is less tangible, but lies in a popular mood whose ebbs and flows are not measurable by the month or year."

In Asia, specifically Buddhist Asia, this image of the river sweeping away the illusions of man is a cliché, like the image of the man carrying the cross of his own destiny in Christian civilization. Timothy Mo was born in Hong Kong and partly educated there. He writes in English and lives in London. He is thus the heir of two civilizations. And in his work the clichés of one are constantly challenged by those of the other.

ON THE SURFACE of his story is the historical clash between two civilizations on the south China coast, which culminated in the first Opium War from 1840 to 1842. It was a war not just between Britain and China, but between the modern, pragmatic, mercantile, scientific, brave new world and the old, inward-looking middle kingdom ruled by the son of heaven, for whom barbarian foreigners could be tribute-bearers at best. That the brittle, self-contained Chinese world would collapse was inevitable; indeed, it had the inevitability of tragedy. That the British gave the first push was coincidental, as was the product over which the war was ostensibly fought: opium.

Mo, mainly through the eyes of two fictional American witnesses, the somewhat pompous Gideon Chase and his more facile friend Walter Eastman, sets the scene of the tragedy well. It is still an oddly familiar scene—the boredom of humid summers; the mediocrity of expatriate life; the high spirits of drunken young Englishmen abroad; the seediness of Old Hands visiting Chinese brothels; the comedy of manners at dance parties in Macao; the arrogance of Western merchants, cynically aware that both God and guns are on their side; the hypocrisy of the Americans, who condemn the ruthlessness of Europeans while profiting from it themselves; the bloody-mindedness of Chinese officials, as yet ignorant of the forces they are dealing with. And the violent climax of the tragedy is described in the sort of vivid detail one would expect from a part-time boxing writer (which Mo is): the brutal slaughter of Chinese troops by Sepoys, brought over from India; the one-sided sea battles; the ghastly effect of a rocket blowing a Chinese ship sky high.

That rocket is a triumph of Western science:

> Before Gideon's horrified eyes, a human arm, including the hand and fingers, suddenly lands with a heavy thump, failing to bounce. He cannot believe what his eyes have seen. He turns to Pedder, but the first lieutenant is concentrating on the next target. Captain Hall surrenders his place at the rocket-tube to the weapon's designated operator. Crouch looks as stunned as if the rocket has hit him, which, in a manner of speaking, it has. "There, there . . . do you see . . ." is all Gideon can manage.
>
> "Interesting effect, Mr. Crouch. I'm sure you're in agreement."
>
> "Prodigious. The destructive power is extraordinary—but the more so the accuracy. I could not believe a rocket might be so precisely delivered."

Science anesthetizes the senses; one is reminded of bomber crews pushing digital buttons over big cities. And the rocket is compared at one point in the story with another scientific invention of the time, the camera: "To the surviving Chinese, scattering on the bank, the brass lens has all the appearance of the barrel of a new and still deadlier weapon of war (which perhaps it is), the more destructive for its small size and apparently innocuous body."

As a kind of parallel stream to the main river of Mo's narrative, there is a continuous rivalry between Walter Eastman, the photographer, and an old Irish painter named O'Rourke. Both depict the same events, one by fixing them in time, the other by interpreting them through his imagination—the world of science against the world of myths and legends:

> On one hill: silent, orderly red lines, glinting with brass and blanco, neat field-batteries of howitzers and rockets unlimbering and forming, discipline and science, hierarchy and professionalism. On the other: a shapeless crowd, waving motley weapons, spilling down the slope and into the valley. Ardor and vehemence. Enthusiasm, spontaneity.

Much of Mo's story is told through newspaper accounts. The irony of it is that he made up the newspaper accounts. Even the potted biography of Gideon Chase, which appears in the appendix, among the biographies of actual historical figures, is a product of Mo's imagination. He has imagined history by entering into the language of the past. Indeed, the entire book—its length, its epic scenes, its social comedy, its moral sermonizing, its almost baroque intricacy—can be read as a comment on the Victorian novel, as a kind of postmodern Thackeray. Perhaps irony is the only weapon left to those

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who live by the imagination in a world bombarded by facts, journalism, and scientific information.

The problem for this postmodern novel, like the problem of postmodernism itself, is that it rarely, if ever, gets beyond cleverness. The point is made over and over again. Mo does not always know when to leave well enough alone. He is so cerebral, so concerned with style, that he cuts his work off from passion, without which art has no life. This novel so full of blood is also rather anemic. It is as if Mo does not really care about his characters except as figures in the landscape of his ideas, to be picked up and discarded like the flat leather puppets in a Javanese shadow play. And if the author does not care, why should the reader? This is not to say that the puppets, or the characters, need to look real; but they must be real at least in the context of their fictional world. Even that degree of reality is undermined by Mo's relentless irony, leaving a brilliant exercise in style and little else.

Art about art is the product of overcivilization. It is particularly popular now in British writing and art-house cinema, produced by a small, gifted coterie of which Mo is a member. It is also very much in the classical tradition of Chinese literati, those refined amateur connoisseurs whose allusions to other works of art were like codes that only they could understand. The last appendix of Mo's book is an "excerpt" from the "unpublished memoirs" of Gideon Chase. In it he makes the following statement:

> The effect produced by photography upon painting, it now seems to me, in the latest work of France, has been to isolate the artist from the public, to make our modern painter insular, private, abstracted, to free him from the tiresome representation of the surface of things, but also to exile him to a realm where taste and knowledge are the private possession of the craft. Their work, treating still in its way of the world we all inhabit and in which we have our being, resembles nothing so much as a cryptic code to the outsider, a message and description of the mundane world, but couched in a cipher to which only an *elite* hold the key.

One could not wish for a better description of Mo's novel. It is a truly insular possession.

IAN BURUMA

Ian Buruma is the author of *Behind the Mask: On the Sexual Demons, Sacred Mothers, Transvestites, Gangsters, Drifters & Other Japanese Cultural Heroes* (Pantheon).

TRB, *from page 4*

Patrick Buchanan argues that Linnas and his ilk should be tried and punished in America under the Genocide Treaty. This is another irony, since that international treaty took years to be approved by the Senate and remains unratified thanks to bitter opposition from Buchanan's nativist conservative allies. But in any event, the Genocide Treaty calls for trials in the country where the crime was committed, or by an international penal tribunal, of which none exists.

Fortunately for our sense of justice, the Soviets are not as fastidious as we are in such matters. I doubt that any of the dozen or so American jurists who heard the Linnas case could tell you whether the Soviet law under which he's been sentenced to death was passed before or after he committed his crimes. Nor is it clear why Soviet justice should apply to acts committed during World War II in Estonia. Estonia was a free nation between the wars. It was allotted to Stalin in the 1939 Hitler-Stalin pact, annexed by the Soviets in 1940, occupied by the Germans in 1941, reoccupied by the Soviets in 1944, and ultimately absorbed.

Present arrangements put us in the morally absurd position of not caring whether a Nazi war criminal in our hands is put to death without trial or permitted to loll peacefully on the beach, so long as it happens elsewhere. This, in turn, leads to the grotesque spectacle of American officials looking for a place to dump unwanted Nazis. We almost shipped Linnas to Panama. The Soviet Union is the only country that wants him, so they win by default.

Yes, war criminals should be punished if possible. One solution would be some sort of international tribunal, as authorized by the Genocide Treaty, that would try these criminals under standards the civilized world could be proud of. As at Nuremberg, the ex post facto problem is not a problem when behavior that violates all conceptions of human decency is involved. Who could not know he was doing something wrong?

Meanwhile, though, I get suspicious of any American politician who makes a great hoo-ha about tracking down elderly Nazis and punishing them, other considerations be damned. This sort of thing is too politically easy to be politically healthy. It's a freebie for liberals wishing to appear tough on crime, and for conservatives and Arab sympathizers who want to prove their lack of anti-Semitism. Punishing Nazis doesn't deter Nazism. It serves the abstract ideal of justice, which is important, but only if that ideal isn't also being disserved in the process.

In affirming Linnas's deportation to the Soviet Union, a federal circuit court declaimed: "Karl Linnas's appeal to humanity, a humanity which he has grossly, callously, and monstrously offended, truly offends this court's sense of decency." But one glory of the American system is that we treat people by our standards, not their own. Karl Linnas is scum. We should have made an example of him.

CORRESPONDENCE, *from page 6*

CATHOLIC CARICATURE

To the editors:

Hendrik Hertzberg's comments on the Vatican's declaration on artificial reproduction contribute nothing new to the ethical debate (Cambridge Diarist, "Vatican't," April 6), but they serve to remind liberal Democrats who are also committed Catholics that their position within the broad political left is increasingly uncomfortable. The problem is not so much that Catholics and liberals disagree on abortion. Rather the new difficulty is the remarkable decline in the civility of liberals and their unwillingness—or incapacity—to engage Catholic leaders in serious debate. Mr. Hertzberg's comments are neither civil (e.g., his reference to "60-year-old Bachelors Who Have Taken Vows of Chastity") nor serious. It is one thing to offer a critique, but quite another to present a caricature.

REV. MICHAEL KERPER
Portsmouth, New Hampshire

MISSION OF MIND

To the editors:

I am grateful to Anne Tyler for the meticulous reading she gave to my novel, *The Messiah of Stockholm* ("The Mission," April 6). But I am perplexed by the distance she places between the exercise of the intellect and what she calls "visceral experience." It seems to me that all ideas are emotions, and that the intellectual and the visceral are one and the same. Mind is not an arid static tract; it is (like language itself, unstinted and unbegrudged) passion's vessel and instrument.

CYNTHIA OZICK
New Rochelle, New York

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Disorder and Early Sorrow

MADAME DEFARGE WOULD have enjoyed Washington. The city's appetite for rolling heads is ravenous. Even the right heads roll sometimes. But sometimes they do not; and so I will defend a friend. The scapegoating of Arthur Hartman is sheer Washington wantonness. It was on his watch, of course, that the Marines in Moscow refused, in their elegant expression, to keep their wicks dry. For his failure to foresee that the Marines would make treason a form of foreplay, Hartman promptly took responsibility. But now, at the end of one of the most interesting and intelligent careers in modern American diplomacy, he is being smeared with other people's sloppiness. It was not Hartman who established the Soviet Embassy on that Himalayan hill in Georgetown. It was not Hartman who established the site of the new American Embassy in Moscow, or who arranged for it to be constructed "off-site" with surveillance-reinforced concrete. A little history shows that those milestones of American misjudgment must be numbered among the accomplishments of Henry Kissinger. But Washingtonians live, like the blessed, in an eternal present; and here is a head whose drop into the basket would confirm conservatives in their mindless conviction that America's relationship with the Soviet Union is merely a matter for spies, and allow liberals who have not lost a wink of sleep over *sandinismo* to grow hoarse with anti-communism.

SINCE HARTMAN'S CRITICS cannot gainsay his competence, they have chosen to make the fight over his view of the world. The affair has become a demagogue's delight. Hartman, runs the canard, is a wet. According to the patriots with the magic pads, his conception of the American presence in Moscow betrays a fundamental misconception of the nature of communism. His view of the Soviet Union is "benign." (After all, he's Foreign Service.) It is true that Hartman argued against the expulsion of Soviet employees from the American Embassy. But that was hardly because he believes that the planet is Pugwash; he worried, instead, that Americans at the embassy might be easily "turned," and he was right. But there's more. Hartman's conception of the American presence in Moscow was based precisely upon his understanding of how *malign* the Soviet Union is. This was what the evidence of his own senses told him. And so he concluded that it was part of the American ambassador's job in a Communist country to bring air. Spaso House became a physical and philosophical retort to its sickened surroundings. In the closed society around him, Hartman opened an American space.

I NEVER VISITED Spaso House, but I know many who did. The report was always the same: for the dissidents and the refuseniks, Hartman was a godsend. He would meet them openly. He would invite them to his house, where they could discuss their politics, read their poems, play their Chopin, eat their matzoh. As Hartman saw it, he was locked in a struggle with the Soviet Union for the spirits of these people. He would try to lift what his hosts were trying to crush. *That* was the reason he ran an "open" embassy. He represented not merely a government, but a political system; and for the stifled and the stout of heart he provided not merely knowledge of that political system, but a taste of it.

AS HARTMAN LEFT MOSCOW, a letter from a Soviet woman found its way to him. It is a remarkable document. "Your presence here not only made a turning point in the whole attitude of Russians to Americans ... but it started, first of all, great changes in the psychology of people here, which even cannot be estimated to the full. You know that we are all here to a greater or lesser degree in the power of Fear with which we grew up.... When Soviet people pass an Embassy they try to avert their eyes lest somebody should see a sparcle [sic] of interest in them. And here you come and it all changes. At first a few people dare to go, cautiously and slightly trembling in every limb but as nothing terrible happens—more and more boldly, more and more people. They are all on a hard long way to overcome their fear, and you cannot imagine how you have helped in it.... Of course the authorities are mad, and try to stop it, but you have made them accept your rules and your ways of dealing with people ..."

THE SOVIETS PENETRATED our embassy and we penetrated their totalitarianism. Of course, winning the war of ideas is a poor excuse for losing the war of bugs. Hartman does not deny this. There is no contradiction between his "openness" and the vigilance required by the high technology and the low cunning of the other side. Stephen Engelberg of the *New York Times* has documented the appalling neglect of the security of the American Embassy in Moscow by recent administrations; there appears to be a lot of blame to go around. So there is hard work to be done. (A friend suggests that we honor Charles Fourier's proposal that an army of soldiers always be accompanied by an army of whores.) But the vilification of Arthur Hartman is not hard work. It is cheap thrills.

THE LAST LETTER I had from Primo Levi was dark and terse. He wrote of his worry for his ailing mother, and alluded elliptically, but with his characteristic calm, to anxieties he would not describe. He hoped, he said, to pick up his work again soon. A few months later he threw himself down a deep stairwell and smashed himself to death. His suicide is spirit-destroying. For it was Levi who was back from death. It was he who stood for the chance of composure after catastrophe, for the possibility that order and decency awaited the survivors of those camps. When Paul Celan took his own life in 1970, you could not be shocked; the act seemed to have completed the decomposition in his work, to have consummated its logic of leave-taking. But Levi remained attached to the world, despite what it did to him. That was why you cherished him. He hated oblivion. He was intact. Or so it seemed. Now I find myself dusting off an old panic: that the survivors never really survived, but merely lived on; that having died once, they will wish to die again; that they are unrestorable even by love. In his writing and in his person, Primo Levi dispelled such fears. He spoke for the bet that there is no blow from which the soul may not recover. When he smashed his body, he smashed his bet.

L. W.

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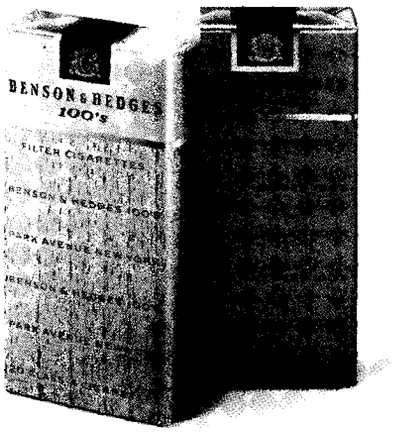

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